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VOL. IV.

THE STOLEN CHILD.

By JOHN GALT, Esq.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1833.

Printed by Stewart and Co., Old Bailey.

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Ontario.
1833

Sir.

THE STOLEN CHILD,

A Tale of the Town,

FOUNDED ON

A CERTAIN INTERESTING FACT.

By JOHN GALT, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "THE AYRSHIRE LEGATEES," "ANNALS OF THE
PARISH," "LAWRIE TOD," ETC.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

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PREFACE.



THE object of this Work is to describe the expression of natural feeling in situations not common ; yet the story is founded on fact, and more ingenuity has, in consequence, been necessarily exerted to conceal circumstances, than would have been requisite had the tale been entirely derived from invention.

As in all the works of the Author, he has endeavoured to give portraits in his principal characters, and he does not think he has failed in the likenesses in this volume, though the public may have a different opinion, not knowing the originals.

The incidents may be fictitious—they are not intended to be altogether so ; and certainly some attention will be paid to ascertain, hereafter, how far criticism may be correct in its views concerning them.

Many years ago, when examining the Elgin Marbles with the late Mr. West, it was the opinion of that eminent artist that they were imitations of natural subjects, and he thought the Cartoons of Raphael of the same description.

This opinion, in unison with an inference drawn from the works of Homer and Shakspeare, convinced the Author that he could follow no better rule than the President himself had deduced. He has done so, and it has been some gratification to have heard gentlemen express themselves convinced of the fact from his productions, even when they could not trace any adventures of the originals. These he always used, as in the present case, but as models, and placed them in situations which were likely to call out the latent biases of their characters.

J. G.

March 26th.

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THE
STOLEN CHILD.

1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the current situation and what needs to be changed.

THE STOLEN CHILD.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

It is not requisite to tell when Mr. Mordant, the barrister, flourished ; few of his years and of his age promised to excel him in ability ; all his friends looked forward to his attainment of the most splendid eminences of the profession ; and he was not more admired for his talents than beloved for his virtues. The only fault that could be ascribed to him was an occasional absence of mind, which wiped out from his memory impressions which to others would have been indelible.

He married early in life a lady to whom he was as much attached as it was possible for an ambitious man to be ; and to his studies he was devoted. He had no enjoyment but in her company, out of his library, and in it he was wholly absorbed in the most recondite researches of the law. With her the cup of domestic felicity could hold no more ; but in the long bright vista of his professional career he saw before him every thing to

stir emulation, and he studied in the lives of his predecessors those incidents in their conduct crowned with renown and success.

While he was yet a young man, his lady bore him two sons, in whom the fondest affections of both parents were wrapped up ; but before the youngest was a year old, the health of the mother began to break, and she became so delicate as to be often confined to the house. But for her delicate state the happiness of Mr. Mordant was unmingled with alloy : it is not, however, ordained for man to taste of unadulterated pleasure.

It happened one day that the two boys, with the hilarity of childhood, were riding on sticks, and, the weather being fine, their mother, delighted too with their artless gaiety, ordered the hall door to be left open, that the children might amuse themselves on the pavement in front of the house.

She sat at the parlor window, and dreaded no harm, as they were constantly in sight.

The house, situated in Southampton-row, then a quiet place, was not exposed to the visitation of vagrants. In this situation she had not sat long when she missed her eldest boy : he had gone, in his buoyancy, down the street, and it was not till he had disappeared some time that she sent the servant to bring him back.

He was not, however, to be seen in the street, and no tidings of him could be obtained. A fearful apprehension seized her ; — the boy to her was lost for ever.

The agitation which the event caused her to suffer, soon, in her invalid condition, terminated fatally. Mordant grieved for her with such ardent

regard, that he forgot the cause which had so untimely brought her to her grave. He lamented but for her ; sorrow sat down upon his heart so implacably that he neglected even his beloved studies, and mourning for her alone, was soon laid beside her, leaving his second son, Augustus, to inherit his fortune : his reputation, many of his friends rightly said, he could not bequeath. He had struck out for himself a new course in the law which no one, with inferior talent and less assiduity, could resume.

I shall not, however, dwell on the accomplishments of this admirable young man ; his place was long fragrant with the sweet odour of his name, and many of his apophthegms are still repeated among the gentlemen of the bar, with expressions of regret that one so young should have been cut off so early.

His father, the honorable and reverend Mr. Mor-dant, being a widower, took the orphan home, and brought him up as his own son.

The old gentleman was the younger brother of a peer, and owed his ecclesiastical promotion to the influence of his family. He was, however, a good easy man, naturally extremely indolent, but in other respects kind and blameless. Three elder brothers cut him off from the probability of attaining his eldest brother's title, nor to him was this a subject of regret ; perhaps, had his son lived, he might have felt more : but he saw him cut down in the blossoms of fame, and grief only augmented his habitual disregard of all things.

At first the little orphan Augustus, who had many childish blandishments, won upon his heart,

and for a while allured him into more activity ; but gradually the predilection of his nature returned, insomuch that he sank into such apathy as to utterly neglect the unfortunate boy ; so that the child, before he had attained his tenth year, was only known to his household as an orphan heir. Could the other boy have been discovered, Augustus would not have stood in this predicament ; but the memory of his loss was faded to the servants, and Augustus was regarded by them as the representative of his father and the grandson of their master.

We have been thus particular because it was not till many years after the death of the old man that the effects of his extreme indolence began to colour the fortunes of Augustus ; not indeed till then was Augustus aware of the fate of his brother. He believed that he had died in childhood, and, of course, never made any enquiry concerning him. Nor was his grandfather, if he ever observed his error, disposed to set him right, but resided on his living, a retired and peaceful man, and, at a late period of old age, bade the world quietly adieu.

CHAPTER II.

IN the course of the same afternoon on which Edward Mordant so strangely disappeared, Doctor Wycombe was taking his evening walk on the common, adjoining to which stood his academy. It was the custom of this personage to enjoy the breezes of the downs as often as he allowed his schoolboys to play, and in consequence, notwithstanding his sedentary occupation, he was a hale and active carle.

His proficiency in classical knowledge was undoubted, but in other branches of education he was not eminent; indeed it was objected to him by many parents, that he paid too little attention to the inculcation of useful knowledge; but nevertheless, the repute of his academy was extensive, and at this time it received an accession of celebrity, chiefly on account of a benevolent action, of which he was at some pains to spread abroad the renown.

It happened, as we have said, that he was taking his customary exercise on the common, when his attention was roused by the cries of a child. It

was not in the Doctor's nature to pay much attention to an incident of this kind ; but the evening was gusty and gloomy, and the forlorn little fellow uttered his disconsolate moan in a low and touching strain, insomuch that Dr. Wycombe could not leave him alone with any credit to himself. He, in consequence, turned his steps towards the boy, but he could make no other meaning from his grief, than the expression of a desire to be carried to his own home. "Carried" was a word which the good Doctor thought ill applied by one of his appearance, for the boy's apparel was mean and ragged, and he was altogether of the stamp of a mendicant's brat, yet his countenance was open and conciliatory.

After some fruitless attempts to make out his story, the Doctor saw that there was no alternative that evening, but to desire the shabby urchin to follow him, promising him a snug corner in the school-room, where he would pass the night in comfort and shelter.

Whether the child understood his words, uttered with considerable elocution, is not told ; but he trotted after the important Doctor, and at his school largely partook of all he had promised, with a cup of bread and milk, which the other boys, by a voluntary contribution levied on their suppers, provided for him ; but when the hour arrived that he was to stretch himself, dog-like, on the school-room floor, he in the most obstinate manner utterly refused.

Some of the bigger boys remonstrated with him on this folly, and assured him that the Doctor would not provide him with better lodging ; but all

would not serve ; the boy was refractory, and would go only to his own bed.

Mrs. Cleanse, the housekeeper, protested that his obstinacy betokened he was accustomed to fare better ; but his duds were a woeful contradiction to her partiality ; the boys also thought he had been used to better things, and sympathised with his grief ; but lie down he would not, and the controversy on this thesis lasted so long, that Mrs. Cleanse deemed it expedient to inform her master of his wilfulness.

Doctor Wycombe had finished his supper when she brought him this intelligence ; he was sitting at a comfortable fire, in an easy chair, with the knees unbuttoned of his black inexpressibles, his grey worsted stockings loose about his legs, and on his feet a dingy pair of red morocco slippers. What he was thinking of we have never ascertained ; but he was in the full enjoyment of *otium cum dignitate*, and rose exceedingly disturbed by a varlet to whom he had been so charitable ; at the same time he seized a birchen rod which was leaning against the mantel-piece, and with stately strides and lowering brows took his way to the school-room, where he found the boys assembled and the little foundling protesting that he would not sleep upon the floor. But the moment that the awful visage of the Doctor was descried looming through the mirk, an instantaneous change took place : nearly all the boys scampered off, leaving our hero to the mercy of the pedagogue, and the remonstrances of three or four of the elder school-boys who remained with him.

Dr. Wycombe was in all his actions methodical

and self-collected; he did not lack in knowledge of human nature, and he had discernment enough to perceive that the foundling had interested the sympathy of all the other children: to have applied the birch as he had intended, in such circumstances would have roused the indignation of the whole school. Although therefore disposed to vindicate his authority, he saw that it would not be allowed without some commotion; accordingly, with the address for which he was famous, he plausibly enquired into the case, and thinking that there might be something not far from truth in the representations of the other boys, he deemed it would be advantageous to the reputation of his feelings, if he allowed the boys who remained behind to take the obstreperous urchin to their dormitory, since no better could be made of it. Thus it happened, that Edward was taken away in triumph, and next morning being Sabbath, the Doctor was moved, by various tales which the little fellow had told his companions, very imperfectly, to institute a more minute enquiry into the causes which had led him to be so destitute and late on the common.

It happened, however, that just at the time of church-going, a terrible shower of rain and hail came on, which prevented the worthy Doctor and his pupils, from going to church, and in the end, the day turned out so exceedingly wet, that they were compelled to abide in the house. In a great measure owing to this circumstance, the Doctor learned the little he was able to collect from Edward; but he was not altogether satisfied with the child's story, for his habiliments contradicted the narrative of his adventures; and the description he

gave of his father's house and servants was altogether irreconcilable with the condition of his appearance.

There are persons in the world who, in spite of this discrepancy, would have imagined that the child's narrative was deserving of more minute investigation; but Dr. Wycombe was not one of those; he made his own comment on what he heard, and the result did not augment to any great degree the real state of the little orphan in his estimation; but Providence never makes a bane without at the same time preparing its antidote.

Mrs. Cleanse was a sound-headed woman, of a good motherly heart, though she was not a mother; and she represented to the Doctor, on that wet Sunday evening, that they should keep the foundling till he was enquired for.

“His meat,” said she, “will never be missed among us; and whether what he has told of himself be true or false, no harm can come to us by having been kind to him.”

The Doctor did not quite relish this suggestion, but he consented to it, for his establishment was large, and he felt the truth of the good woman's representation.

Thus it came to pass that the boy remained for some days in the Doctor's house, until the accident, by which he had been taken there, was well noised abroad in the neighbourhood. He was much commended by all his parishioners of a certain class for his great humanity; those of the lower order were not so loquacious of this, for somehow with them he was not held in much reverence; and with the usual detraction of those

who, by their wants, have a keen sense of humane feelings, they were somehow of opinion that he was a proud and greedy character, and but little disposed to chasten adversity when she appeared among the lowly. But in the more respectable class, the charity of his disposition was duly appreciated, and particularly by an old gentleman of the name of Pearl, who had spent much of his life abroad in some public capacity, in which he had made a moderate fortune.

In the close of his career Mr. Pearl had returned to his native parish with the intention of enjoying the evening of life in the tranquillity of the setting sun ; but he had outlived all whom he had known in early youth, and he could scarcely have come to a spot so sad and barren as the green fields of his home. Even his name was not known in his native place when he took up his abode in it on his return, and he lived, in consequence, a solitary life in a lone white house, which stood on the edge of the common about half a mile from the Doctor's academy. By this man the benevolence of Dr. Wycombe towards the poor child was highly applauded, and on the following Sunday, as he was returning from church, he called to learn the particulars, and to ascertain if the report was correct.

CHAPTER III.



MR. PEARL was a good, rather than a clever old bachelor, his vocation abroad was strictly official, and he was more famous in it for the exactitude with which, in the routine, he adhered to the precedents of his predecessors, than for his disposition to improve them, although it was thought by many that they were not perfect; all his days accustomed to office, he had but little experience of the world, and his failings in consequence leant to the side of virtue. He was good-natured, and the blandishments of that indulgent spirit made all things appear to him with innocence, even to such a degree as to be almost beautiful. He was, in short, a very amiable person, and it augured well for our little hero that so excellent an old man had taken so early and so ardent an interest in his welfare; yet in this it may be thought Mr. Pearl was not altogether disinterested. He was some years turned of three score; he wearied that the employment was at an end, in which he had so long been engaged, and he sighed in his father's house that all the companions of his youth

were gone, and his native parish was as lonely to him as the wildest region where his fortune had been cast.

From the moment that he heard of our hero, to whom the name of Edward Troven had been given by the boys of Doctor Wycombe's school, he felt himself greatly excited, and resolved, notwithstanding the kindness of the doctor left no doubt of his willingness to take care of the boy, that he would relieve him from the expense.

"I have," said the old man to himself, as he went to church, "more than enough for all my wants, and in the solitude of this world it will serve to vary the monotony of old age, if I bring this boy to reside with me: like him, I am forlorn in the world; I know not whom to call a friend, but I have no enemies."

The sermon of the Doctor was in unison with this frame of mind, it was correctly written, a little too Johnsonian in the turns of the periods, but it was delivered with great solemnity, and to the heart and mind of Mr. Pearl sounded as something emphatical and fine. He listened with attention; the sonorous phraseology was congenial to the best feelings of his humane disposition, and before the conclusion he was resolved to execute his design.

Accordingly, when the congregation was dismissed, Mr. Pearl in his way homeward joined the Reverend Doctor on the road, and went with him to the Academy-House. Their talk of course was on the season of the year, the precarious state of the weather, and of the humanities which the topic was well calculated to inspire. The obser-

vations of the Doctor were delivered with choice emphasis ; an *ora rotunda* echoing of his discourse was mingled with aphorisms and quotations from the classics, which Mr. Pearl not understanding, could not sufficiently admire. The only difference between him and the Doctor was owing to a very trivial circumstance : Doctor Wycombe was eloquent on the destitute condition of the poor, the houseless wanderer, and all that ; but Mr. Pearl thought it was the duty of those who could afford it, to mitigate the pressure of distress, and declared that his mite of contribution for this object was at all times in readiness.

From less to more, they began to speak of the circumstances in which our hero was found, and the Doctor gave a pathetic recital of the whole incident, and the more particularly, as he had a willing auditor. Mr. Pearl was moved to tears when the Doctor described the poor child weeping in destitution, his story confused with sighs and sobs, his shoeless feet red with cold, and enlarged on the voracity of his hungry appetite.

By the time they had reached the gate of the Academy the sadness was all rehearsed, and Mr. Pearl had disclosed his intention to his Reverend friend, who applauded it greatly, especially when the old gentlemen intimated that although the boy should reside with him, he yet intended that he should attend the school of the benevolent Doctor. In truth, the Doctor, though well spoken of by all his respectable neighbours, was yet liked by few ; for which we never heard a better reason assigned than that he had a something prominent about his cheekbones which was not handsome.

Mr. Pearl, in consequence of a lowering squall in the north-west, did not enter, as he had proposed, into the house, but hurried home to his own, after parting with the Doctor, as quickly as possible, leaving till Monday the final arrangements.

It could not be said of this gentleman that he enjoyed a religious temperament, but he was a strict observer of fasts and holidays, not knowing in what he might offend by neglecting to keep any of them: the consecration of the Sabbath he justly regarded, as it always ought to be. Abroad in his office, he revered it as a division of time, as natural as the day and the night, the seasons and their changes, the new and waning moon. Thus it came to pass, that he would have done no more upon the blessed day than he did do, in announcing his gentle intention; but he was actuated on this occasion by another motive: he had not divulged his humane design to Mrs. Servit, his housekeeper, on whose opinion he had great reliance, and whom it was his greatest pleasure to consult.

Mrs. Servit was of a matronly altitude of years, but nevertheless considerably his junior: of her birth, parentage and education, we have no very perfect account; her accent, however, betrayed her Scottish origin, and yet she did not exactly speak the language of that country, though with a few deviations she evinced a perfect mistress of its most recondite and common idioms. She was above the rank of a servant, in as much as she shared the meals of Mr. Pearl, and in every other respect did the honours of his house and table; yet she was on a salary, and considered it her duty,

as she said, "on no pretence to avoid a turn of work."

She was early a widow, and obliged from the pecuniary straitness of the circumstances in which she was left, to have recourse to this way of life, for she had no very near relations to assist her, although it must be acknowledged, that like her countrywomen in general, she had a distant view of brilliant cousins, that raised their bright heads afar off like the snowy tops of their native mountains.

In many points Mrs. Servit had really a great deal of merit: no person could have made a more accurate gauge of her situation; for, although her virtues were of a homely and domestic kind, she was yet shrewd and discerning, and experience had taught her to trust much to her own exertions. Early in life she had married a young man to whom she was much attached, and whose singular talents promised them a prosperous career; but the seeds of a mortal disease lurked in his blood, of which he died in the course of the first year, bequeathing his widow to Providence, and the tender mercies of the world.

That she was disappointed in her fortune, cannot be denied, and pined for some time for the loss of an accomplished young man, with whom she anticipated encreasing prosperity; but finding soon that "tears were not tarts," she boldly abandoned the Scottish metropolis, the seat of her hopes, and with an alacrity that bespoke decision and independence of character, became the companion of an old English lady, who believed that Scotland produced nothing but geniuses, and was desirous of being able to read the poems of Burns with fluency and

propriety. The Edinburgh Review was not then published.

Mrs. Servit heard of the situation, and was soon installed in all its anxieties and emoluments, in the enjoyment of which she continued several years, conducting herself so well, that when the old lady died, and could therefore make no further use of her income, she had the kindness to leave her indefatigable companion an annuity of no less than thirty pounds a-year.

To pass from the situation she had occupied with so much distinction into another similar, was not so difficult as the transition she had already undergone, and accordingly she found herself soon the companion of a lame lady, with whom she remained without much happiness a long period of years, until, indeed, she heard that Mr. Pearl required a house-keeper of a certain age, and who would enjoy with him all the appliances that we have enumerated.

In process of time she became to him so convenient and necessary, that he did nothing but what she approved ; and experience had taught her that it was always the most agreeable course to advise him to adopt whatsoever he appeared most inclined to. It is, however, only doing this commendable woman justice to acknowledge, that in this she was more influenced by a wish to see others happy, than to attain any ascendancy. The course of fortune had taught her that life is short, and is a succession of vicissitudes often bitter enough naturally, without people taking the trouble of making them more so ; no doubt her cheerful spirit extracted pleasure from all innocent things, and habitude made her sensible

that in the indulgence of this humour lay the only sweetness that could appease the acids of life.

Such was the character Mr. Pearl found himself obliged to consult before he ventured to adopt the foundling; and few but himself could have apprehended a veto on his paternal design.

CHAPTER IV.

By the time Mr. Pearl had reached his own gate, the squall which he had observed in the sullen north-west was raging in the trees, and sowing around the showers with which it was loaded ; but he reached the door before he was much harmed, and Mrs. Servit was ready to let him in.

She had prepared for him his accustomed meal ; but, what he valued above good living, she had also prepared a blazing fire, whose flickering flames gave, in such a day, a cheerful welcome. Having dried the damp from his shoes and stockings, dinner was served, and he partook of a frugal repast without much talk ; his mind was, indeed, laden with an important subject, and a person of less discernment than his notable housekeeper might have seen that he was big with serious thought.

When the cloth was removed, and the decanters, with their frugal dessert, were set upon the table, he put his hand behind the back of his head, and, having ascertained that his slender tie was safe, he said to Mrs. Servit, as he filled her glass with wine —

“ It is all true : the Doctor has the foundling in his house, poor orphan ! it is a very little child, though I have not yet seen it, and there is good reason to believe that it was destined to a happier lot.”

“ I always thought so,” replied the considerate Mrs. Servit ; “ and I have no doubt it will be a credit to the Doctor, when the rights of the case are understood by the stripling’s relations.”

“ Stripling ! bless you, it is but a child turned of three years or so ; helpless it is, and they had hard hearts who abandoned it upon the common.”

“ So I think ; they could never have been its parents,” she added, “ who were guilty of such a step-mother-like act.”

“ You are always very kind,” replied Mr. Pearl ; “ I have seldom met with a person who had clearer ideas of those who are left to desolation than yourself.”

“ It ought to be no gift to brag of,” replied the lady ; “ for what could a babe or suckling do for itself, left like this poor laddy in a howling wilderness ?”

“ I have been grieved,” said Mr. Pearl, “ to think of it ; and I have taken a project into my head, which I hope you will approve.”

“ You are a considerate man,” said the lady ; “ and no project can enter your head concerning such a heart-cutting business that does not deserve a blessing.”

“ I am very glad, Mrs. Servit, to hear you say so ; but the worst of it is, that it cannot be carried into execution without increasing your trouble.”

“ That’s what you aye say, when you have a

pleasure in hand for me : what is this scheme now ?”

“ I have been thinking,” said the old gentleman, “ that we have more bed-rooms in this house than there are sleepers for them ; and it has occurred to me that one of them might be put to worse service than in being made a domicile for this Edward Troven, which they have baptized the child anew.”

“ That’s just my opinion,” said Mrs. Servit ; “ but I knew it was a thought that would come into your own head, and little is it my business to forestall the natural working of goodness in a kind bosom.”

“ And you really, Mrs. Servit,” said Mr. Pearl, “ would take it no trouble if I brought the destitute orphan home with me ?”

“ Trouble !” she exclaimed ; “ it is my duty to do every lawful thing that you require, and surely I have given no testimony, in the four years that I have been in this house, to cause you to ever suspect that I would hesitate to be art and part in an action of Christian charity.”

“ But our housemaid,” said the old gentleman ; “ what will she say ? it will bring a great increase of toil on her.”

“ Who would think of that ?” replied Mrs. Servit ; “ she must just do as she is bidden, and her darg is very easy.”

In this manner the way was paved for the reception of the foundling in the house of Mr. Pearl ; and next morning the old gentleman, betimes, went over for him to the academy, and returned with the jocund urchin, holding him by the fore-

finger. Mrs. Servit received the boy with unaffected pleasure, made much of him, comforted him with apples, and suggested that a tailor should be sent for to the village, to make him a suit of new clothes, all which was accordingly done; and the boy, being of a sprightly temper, his presence greatly enhanced the enjoyment of the good old man.

In the mean time, whether Mr. Mordant, in London, had caused any search for him to be made, has not been ascertained; on the contrary, there is some reason to fear, from his occasional absence of mind, that the infant was soon forgotten, so much was he entranced with the affliction of his beloved and delicate lady. The remainder of the story has been already told. She died soon after the event, and he sunk himself with grief to the grave, leaving his second son, Augustus, to the care of his father, an opulent clergyman, a member of a noble family, and but in the fourth degree removed from the barony. As his native character had prevented the old gentleman from holding much intercourse with his brothers, for a number of years he had, without any quarrel, held none, for his church preferment was in a remote part of the kingdom, and he rarely stirred from home.

The peer, at this time, was well stricken in years, unmarried, and had acquired some reputation for the service he had done the state. The other three brothers, according to the fashion of that corrupt age, held public employments, in which they respectively performed their duty with as much credit as could reasonably be expected; but though

married, none of them had a son to succeed him : the one next to the peer, however, had a daughter, and, failing the descendants of the clergyman, she would succeed to the vast inheritance of the family.

Such was the state of things in which our story commences ; but in a short time, the third son of the four brothers, who were older than the clergyman, happened to die, without occasioning much remark, and, in the course of two years after, the clergyman also quitted this earthly scene, bequeathing his grandson to his elder brother, the peer ; in doing so he neglected, or forgot to mention, the predicament in which the child stood with the unknown fate of his elder brother. It thus came to pass that Augustus was transferred to the care of his noble uncle, without being aware himself of the situation in which he stood, or the peer of his doubtful pretensions ; indeed, his claim to succeed to the title was rendered uncertain by the wife of the youngest of the three brothers unexpectedly becoming pregnant just at this time : nor were the habits of the peer such as led the family to look for much attention from him to his heirs, for he was an official man, fond of place, delighted with its cares, and, childless himself, he thought but little of who should succeed him. He only knew that Augustus was the grandson of his younger brother, and he believed him to be the presumptive heir to his title and domains. Thus, more by the influence of personal character, than even the extraordinary event of which we are the historians, a noble family deeply connected with the administration of the state, grew into such ignorance

of themselves, that they gave rise to a romance of real life which has few parallels.

In giving birth to a child, the lady and her husband were grievously disappointed. They expected a son, and largely counted on his inheritance; but it was a daughter, and the mother was so shaken in the birth that she fell into bad health and never recovered. Augustus was thus considered by all his uncles as the heir of the family, and treated as such accordingly.

In the course of a short time the peer died, and was successively succeeded by his two surviving brothers, neither of whom was long-lived; inso-much, that Augustus, while yet far in his minority, attained the barony as a matter of course, and was brought up as a young nobleman of ancient lineage and great inheritance.

It is needless to pursue, at present, his history further: his education was, in all respects, befitting his prospects, and it could not be said to be uncommon.

Our hero is, however, Edward Troven, whose singular fate it is the purpose of these pages to record; and we shall, therefore, bid adieu for a while to his younger brother, and return to him who, considering the strangeness of his lot, was, in some measure, singularly compensated for it by the kind-heartedness of Mr. Pearl, and the maternal dispositions of his housekeeper, Mrs. Servit.

CHAPTER V.

FROM the moment that Troven was received into the house of Mr. Pearl, he was, as a matter of course, considered as one of the family, and the house-maid, without instructions, marked a place for him, young as he was, at the table where the master and Mrs. Servit usually dined. This circumstance, at the moment, excited some enquiry with certain interjectional exclamations of the worthy lady. It is true that she herself had meditated the same thing, and the old gentleman confessed that he had brought him for a toy, but how the damsel should have thought and acted as she did, furnished conversation for the remainder of the day. This no doubt was owing to something in the stars of the child, for his rags betokened that he would have been fortunate had he been brought up in the kitchen ; but as Mrs. Servit said, on observing what the maid had done : —

“ It’s all right ; who would treat a foundling like a common wean ? — who knows what nest he belongs to, what song he’ll sing, and what’na bough of the fragrant tree he’s ordained to chirp

from ? For my part, if he was not made one of ourselves, my conscience concerning him would not be very peaceable ; for it runs before me that the upshot of his life is to be a grand thing for us all, and Molly has been impelled by a feedum out of the common to do what she has done."

" Indeed," quoth Mr. Pearl : " when I saw her lay a dessert knife and fork, and a dessert spoon for the child, I thought, Mrs. Servit, that she was only fulfilling an invention of yours, and gave you to her great credit for the device ; but I was really confounded when she told me that you had no hand in the job, and that it all came of her own forethought, which you will allow is a very extraordinary thing ; for although she has been a long time with us, I never saw the dinner rightly served since she came, and therefore I say with you, that out of her own head to lay a place for the child is most miraculous."

When dinner was brought up, with equal astonishment to both the gentleman and lady, the merry boy seemed to know his own place.

" He is something," said Mrs. Servit, when she saw him looking about him for his high befitting seat.

" In truth," said the old man ; " he is, and it was very considerate of you to take off his rags and dress him in clean things of your own ; to be sure they don't fit quite so well as I hope his new clothes will, but they are better than those filthy rags which he had on, and which made him seem a true beggar-boy."

" Yes," replied Mrs. Servit ; " if his present cleading does not sit so well upon him as the royal

robes do upon the king, he is more becoming to the station of life that he is ordained to be brought up in, than in yon filthy duds : preserve us ! I was glad to get them off ; but the lasses have carried their whigmalleery too far ; for there was no need to put one of my night-mutches on him, and really I must say that his red cockade, like a peony-rose, is just like what old Mr. Goul, the minister of the parish that I came frae, called a work of supererogation : but sit down, or the dinner will grow cold. Neddy, my man, climb to your seat and behave yourself."

The conversation while they remained at table was most edifying, for the foundling was none incommoded by his new situation : once he expressed some wonder at what had become of John, the footman ; but it was a mere expression ; it called however, from Mrs. Servit a " Ha, sir, did ye hear that ?" and presently she added, " as sure as a gun, he has been something."

Mr. Pearl said that he had no doubt in his mind on the subject, only he was surprised that no enquiry had been set on foot for a lost child ; but fate, fortune, or providence was at the bottom of the plot.

" He will, ye see, be left with us till he has gathered our affections, and then he will be taken from us ; I wish we had never seen him, if that's to be the case."

" 'Deed, Mr. Pearl, if we are ordained to bear such a calamity, what I'm sure you are minded to do for the blithe bairn had better no be done, unless you lend an hearing ear to my counsel."

" I cannot refuse that," said the old gentleman ; " for ye never give an advice but it is well worth the taking."

“ Ah, sir, many a time ye say the same thing ; but like the rest of mankind, you will have a will of your own.”

“ I am, my dear Mrs. Servit, not an obstinate man ; I have only a salutary respect for what is right, and every proper regard for your opinion and experience,—what would you advise ?”

“ Well, if you will not be angry with me, and start out at the door like a bristled pea, I think I could say anent — Oh, Neddy, you rascal, you have broken the handle of my best china poury ; really a man would have to hae a good fortune, I trow, to bring up such a ramplor laddy.”

“ Well, but Mrs. Servit, what advice do you give ?”

“ I’m in such a fluster that I can give none at all. Only think, this poury is now a cumberer of the ground, and unless it be to hold lilies and tulips on the mantel-piece, its jurisdiction is gone for ever.—But what I was going to say anent Edward. If he would be a well behaved bairn, and no a rank ringing enemy to keep the house in hot water, I would keep him in the way that you intend, and never say a word about how he was gotten, or take any step either to send the bell about the parish, or to stick hand-bills on the doors of the kirk and market.”

“ That’s just what I was thinking,” said Mr. Pearl ; “ but you must put your china in places beyond his reach ; for the breaking of it all children you know, my dear Mrs. Servit, are much given to, especially when it is very good. I remember myself, that my grandmother had a beautiful green Mandarin standing at the front of her

cupboard, with a provoking smile, which made me and my companions (alas they are all dead and gone now !) resolve to punish it with walnuts. One day after dinner, we went to take our revenge, but there was some mistake in our aim, for as I had the first shy, I missed the image, and brought down a tier of jelly-glasses, which had stood in the upper shelf as long as I remembered, and the use of which my worthy ancestors could not tell, but said that somebody once borrowed them to hold syllables."

" Ah !" said Mrs. Servit, " great is the odds between gets that are of the male sex, and mim well-bred misses ; but I remember in my younger day, this world was not without sin ; one fast, I mind it as well as yesterday, a pea was put in the stroup of our best tea-pot, by a hand that shall be nameless, and twelve month good after, my mother happened to discover the misdeed, and I trow she too well knew where to lay her angry hand ; but really, Mr. Pearl, we are forgetting, that as the old cock crows the young cock learns, and I was going to say, that if this mischief would settle himself, we could afford to keep him very well ; but he must give up this handling of valuables if we do."

" Then," replied Mr. Pearl, " you think that we might do worse than keep the boy altogether ?"

" Worse !" exclaimed the good lady, " it would be an almous deed to do so, especially as we read every week in the news how men are put to death by the war in High Germany, to say nothing of the crowded state of the parish workhouse, and the swarms of pocket pickers in London town, that have hands like tongs and fire-shovels ; but, sir,

these are not all the reasons that spring up in my mind like hemp stalks, when I think of it: what would you say if our foundling was a lord's son?"

The old man shook his head, and gravely confessed that his thoughts did not run so high: "I am a moderate man in all things," said Mr. Pearl; "but for the sake of conversation, suppose that the rags were his own clothes, and his parentage no better than it should be."

"Did I ever hear the like of that!" exclaimed Mrs. Servit: "had Neddy raxed over the table and gripped a potatoe in an unmannerly paw, like a grumphie, there might be some sense in the observe; but after seeing him with your own eyes dining like a judge or a provost, such a speech, you will excuse me, shows the frailty of your understanding. I wonder how a man of your discretion should let such words fall out of his head."

"I confess," said Mr. Pearl, "that as you have put the proposition, my inattention deserves the rebuke; nothing can be clearer than that little Neddy is no vulgar boy; and as I find that idle time sits upon me with the loose entanglement of a giant's mantle, I think he will help me to make a good habit of it."

"Can you have a misdoubt?" said Mrs. Servit; "he will be a pleasure to you, and give all the comfort that a parent enjoys, and not have troubled you with the pains of child-birth."

To this effect, while they sat after dinner, the good and kind lady and gentleman, with that freedom with which they were in the custom of practising towards each other, thus severally discussed whether Edward Troven should remain with them;

and, in the end, the question was settled between them in the affirmative : we have, in consequence, an agreeable task to execute, namely, the details of our hero's education, and that love and care which, as he grew to maturity, served to make him answer all the purposes of a true son to Mr. Pearl and Mrs. Servit.

In adopting him, however, the neighbourhood very sapiently expressed their disapprobation of the kindness. They foresaw from the ill-judged benevolence of the act, an increase of the poor-rates : and Miss Priscilla Gadfly, in taking tea one evening with Mrs. Wycombe, made a point of hearing the doctor on the subject ; and he agreed, that however commendable the act might be in an individual sense, yet in a general, it was ill-timed, inexpedient, and could not be sufficiently reprobated.

“That, Doctor,” replied Miss Priscilla, “is just the echo of my own thoughts ;” for she was an old maid past bearing, who looked upon children as living nuisances, going before her to church, becking their heads and mimicking her gait.

Hearing the Doctor so decided in his opinion of the ill example which Mr. Pearl's soft-heartedness, as he said, set to the rest of the world, she inquired if there were no law by which the foundling might be taken from him, and the parish bea-dles instructed to convey the astonishment and surprise of the whole neighbourhood at his unjustifiable conduct. Dr. Wycombe was a prudent man, and made no answer to the lady ; but, rising from his seat beside her, he went to another part of the room, leaving her to descant on thoughtless and charitable delinquency.

CHAPTER VI.

Nothing occurred particularly during the education of our hero. Before going to the school of Dr. Wycombe, he was only remarkable for his good nature and sprightliness, with now and then a streak of something singular, that at times seemed like the endowment of genius. At school he was not distinguished from the other boys; he learned his lessons as well, not better; but he took apparently little interest in their pastimes, and yet he was the best beloved of the school. Nature had given him the disposition, at that early age, of being uncommonly obliging: of all his qualities, he was chiefly eminent for the willing cheerfulness with which he undertook and performed every thing that was required of him, innocent in itself and required with deference, for pride was a very obvious ingredient in his character — not an over-weening pride, that made him think himself better than others, but an independence of spirit, that kept him from consenting to do what his mind did not approve. To his benefactor and Mrs. Servit he was an acquisition, and the light which shone

around him was an ample return for their kindness. Before he was brought to the house, their life was monotonous ; it was not certainly shaded with any hue of sadness, but it was dull and uniform. Mr. Pearl, after consuming his best years in the routine of office, often felt it tedious ; the prankful childhood of Troven, however, diversified its current, and made it brighter and apparently gayer.

After spending the usual time at school, our hero declared his intention to study the law, induced by an impressive elocution in which his school-fellows acknowledged his superiority.

When the time arrived that he should attend the university, Mr. Pearl, to whom he was become almost necessary, consented to the separation with reluctance. He was then, indeed, become very infirm, but he possessed a competency of good sense that kept his innocent peculiarities from being obtrusive. Age and inclination would have made him retain Troven with himself, but he saw that it would be for the advantage of the young man to support him at college, and, accordingly, with the same willingness that he had borne the cost of keeping him for many years, he contributed with pleasure to his further education.

The removal from Mr. Pearl's house to the monasteries of Oxford, was the era of a change in the life of our hero. Under the wing of his protector, it had passed with mirth and happiness ; his playful temper lent a sparkling animation to every thing, which increased the pleasures of Mr. Pearl's life ; and there was something in the maternal assiduities of Mrs. Servit, in excellent harmony at all times

with the hilarity of his spirits ; but it was remarked, after his arrival at Oxford, that he became more thoughtful, as if a sterner quality were added to his other gifts, and the change undoubtedly partook of that nature. This alteration, which was soon visible, was the effect of reflections on his foundling condition. With Mr. Pearl he had no experience, or rather he was not sensible of any essential change from what he had been accustomed to in his father's house ; but at the university he felt his own nothingness, and his reflections on it was that hardening of character to which we have alluded ; in other respects he did not appear in any degree altered ; he pursued, with the same constancy, his studies, and held the same rank, as to ability, which he did at Dr. Wycombe's school in the latter time. He was spoken of somewhat, however, more decidedly as a man of genius, and, from the regularity of his conduct, it was inferred that he would be a distinguished character, but his talents were under-rated ; in fact, Troven was one of that kind of young men in whom the intellectual development is slow and long, but the extent to which it may reach is seldom ascertained ; for their progress is to the end of life, and never interrupted but by the accident of disease.

In the beginning of life conduct is of more importance than talent ; and it was from the augury formed on his manners, more than on his superior endowments and attainments that his success was predicted. He was still, however, a remarkable young man, and had that air and predilection about him by which, unconscious to himself,

he formed his intimates among the students of rank.

At that time his brother, who had succeeded to the title of Lord Buyborough and the inheritance of the Mordant family, was at Oxford, and more esteemed for the qualities of his heart than his head, but nevertheless a good plain character — one distinguished rather for honesty and sincerity than talents or loftier virtues. Between his lordship and our hero some accidental acquaintanceship arose, but it was followed by no particular intimacy ; all that can properly be said of it was that they were known to each other just as we sometimes see in society men meet one another with a readier recognition, who are still not particularly acquainted. Of their mutual relationship they had, of course, not the slightest conception ; and the term passed with both in this ignorance. At the close of it his lordship retired to his friends and greatness ; and our hero to the house of his benefactor, which he considered his home, and in which he never missed the lack of any circumstance which renders home agreeable. Mrs. Servit, it is true, was a little vexed to observe the change in his character, which, however, she kindly attributed to some occult influence of the college, for which she entertained a very reverential opinion ; but when, at last, the first impression wore off, and she perceived that it was an addition more than an alteration that made him so sedate, she reconciled herself to the change by ascribing it to his advance in life.

Mr. Pearl was not so observant as the worthy matron : at no time very sharp, the decay of age

had blunted his faculties, but all his feelings were absorbed in the pleasure of seeing our hero again. When setting life, however, had given forth its fading glow, he sunk back into the lethargy from which he only now and then, as it were, awoke. His situation was not, indeed, calculated to brighten the reflections of our hero, for every thing about him showed that he was on the shore of time, and could not have long to live.

All day Mr. Pearl sat drowsy in his easy chair by the fire, whose vigour was regulated by the weather, and spoke little, but still it was to the purpose; and what he said showed that his recollection was unimpaired; but while Troven remained with him, he took, after the first evening, no notice of him, and, in consequence, perhaps the time was duller than its wont. At last it was necessary that Troven should return to college, and he bade adieu to the helpless old man with a pang that did credit to his nature. He saw that his days would not be long in the land, and felt that, when he was gone, all around him would be a desolation; but the buoyancy of youth was still in his bosom, and he returned to the scene of his studies with mingled sadness, resolution and courage.

On the day subsequent to his departure, Mrs. Servit remarked, that Mr. Pearl was greatly excited; his bed was restless, and in his easy chair he had no repose. A change, she apprehended, was about to manifest itself, and she was touched with anxiety and alarm, but her fears were not of long duration. The old man brightened up, and for several days seemed to recover his wonted strength, like that second growth with which, at the

fall of the year, trees and shrubs sometimes shoot forth in leaves of a brighter green. He spoke to her of making his will, and of inviting, for that purpose, a relation, Mr. Ezra Pearl, an attorney settled in the next market town.

As he mentioned his intention to Mrs. Servit, she was greatly startled at hearing of this remote cousin, but she only signified that she heard his intention. However, Mr. Ezra was sent for, and received the old man's instructions, completing the will without Mrs. Servit being consulted as to any of its provisions—a circumstance which was exceedingly uncomfortable to her, for she thirsted to know the legacies, and to whom left, and particularly the amount bequeathed to Troven.

Previous to this time, knowing Mr. Pearl had no near relations, she had built an airy castle that he would be the inheritor, and herself allowed to superintend his domicile after the death of his benefactor. But all her phantom fabric was destined to be dissolved. She bore, however, the trial with equanimity, and her rectitude prevented her curiosity from attaining that ascendancy which a surreptitious inspection of the document would have produced. We, however, must return to our hero, and describe what passed with him before we have again occasion to advert to this important transaction.

CHAPTER VII.



THE natural aristocracy of our hero's manner, which Mrs. Servit ascribed to college learning, continued to increase, and he had not been long at Oxford for the second time, when his distinguished air attracted universal attention. Whether it arose from the intensity of his reflections about himself, or was a development of his corporeal appearance, would lead us into too nice a discussion were we to attempt to ascertain, nor would it much amuse or instruct the reader if we did ; let it suffice then that we merely mention the fact.

This peculiarity and some secret affinity, led him among other young men who were esteemed of a higher rank, and as his company was agreeable to them, he was much thought of at their parties ; the consequence was, that although Mr. Pearl's allowance was as liberal to him as to a son, he soon found it inadequate to enable him to keep this sort of society, and saw if he exceeded what his generous friend so freely gave, he might incur his displeasure before he was prepared to take a place in the business of the world ; he might feel, in conse-

quence, all the calamities of his unfortunate founding condition. This gave rise to thoughts gravitating towards independence. He soon perceived that his studies, except for the flourish of quotations in speeches, were not likely to be of much use in his professional researches : at Dr. Wycombe's school he had acquired a tolerable knowledge of the classics, and attendance at lectures, hearing prayers and solitary reading, constituted his employment at the University. All he learned there that would be useful to him afterwards, he saw, might as well be acquired in one of the inns of court of London as in Oxford ; accordingly, he wrote to Mr. Pearl how the case stood, and entreated that he might be permitted to enter himself at once in the Temple, adding, that if his allowance were not sufficient for a residence in London, he would endeavour, by literary pursuits, to supply what would be wanted, while it would remove him from those acquaintances with whom he was convinced his circumstances did not justify him in associating.

The old man received his letter with pleasure ; he was at no time of a discerning spirit, but he saw in this request, a consciousness of possessing a brave ability to encounter the world, and a feeling of independence, which could not be sufficiently applauded. Mrs. Servit did all she could to enhance this impression, it was to her as a fulfilment of a prophecy, which she had herself long predicted. Her joy at seeing her favorite so soon among the lights of the world can be better imagined than described.

The permission was readily granted, and the preparations for a final settlement in London, were

so quickly undertaken by Troven, that in a few days before he intended to leave the University, it was known to his companions that he would soon remove, and one of them, we forget his name, a young gentleman commoner, the heir to a considerable estate, gave an entertainment of wine and a dessert, in his chambers, in honour of his departure. At this party was a Mr. Bradford, who, though very intimate with the host, was not much acquainted with our hero, for he did not like Troven, and, in consequence, cared little for his company.

Mr. Bradford was one of those characters which, luckily for the world, are of a bifold nature. He was endowed with more talent than most men, but he was extremely jealous of a superior; and the effect of this was disagreeably encreased even to a morbid degree, when, by any accident, his opinions were not received with that deference to which he considered them entitled. With his inferiors he was much esteemed; they acknowledged his ability, and he felt his superiority; with his equals he was captious and disagreeable; and towards those who were his undoubted superiors, he was sullen and detractive, nor did his manners mitigate his conceit of himself. He was an only son; his father was dead, and his mother, under whose eye he had been entirely educated till he came to college, was a vain, capricious woman, from whom he inherited an uncertain temper, that made him often appear very unamiable. This defect was united to a vulgar person, and a physiognomy not prepossessing.

That Mr. Bradford was not, in any respect, our

hero's equal, was very obvious. In person it would have been absurd to compare them: in acquirements Troven was greatly his master, and his high-born air, and the beautiful melody of his elocution, were such as are seldom met with. In the party Bradford was not content; the lustre of Troven was, to his, as the diamond to the garnet; and, as the wine kindled his feelings, he became more and more excitable. He felt that he was but secondary to Troven, and, before the evening was half spent, he regarded him with ill-concealed antipathy.

We shall not describe all the workings of this irksome sentiment, but, in the course of conversation, some debate arose how a particular passage of an ancient oration should be delivered. Different gentlemen illustrated their opinions by repeating the passage, and among others our hero. His fine appearance, and the eloquence of his voice, were so manifestly superior, that his version was admitted by acclamation to be the best. But Bradford remained silent; his ungainly figure and husky voice, made him far below the level of Troven; and, undoubtedly by the influence of the wine, he, with more acrimony than was necessary, pronounced the whole affair as a silly exhibition of spouting.

The greatest weakness in the character of Troven lay in the belief of his superior elocution, and he was nettled to hear a person speak so lightly of the art, especially as that person was by nature incapable of excellence in it. He said, however, nothing offensive, intending to let the subject pass, but he looked at the spiteful Bradford with ineffable scorn; and, to save the recital of details, his

look was instantly noticed. A violent altercation ensued, to which Bradford, incensed by drink and passion, concluded with demanding satisfaction or an apology.

Troven refused both in the most decided manner, and proved to the satisfaction of the other gentlemen present, that he was not the insolent aggressor. In doing this, he conducted himself at once with so much hauteur and propriety, that the company, with the exception of Bradford, unanimously acquitted him of any wrong, on which the envious young man shrunk out of the room so meanly, that he was sent to Coventry, by the resolution of the whole party, at the recommendation of their host.

This affair made much noise at the time, and had the effect of rendering Troven better known; for, this hauteur, of which every one spoke, was so well tempered with propriety in his expressions, that his good sense and just indignation were universally admired, and he received many congratulations and good wishes on his departure. Among others, his brother, Lord Buyborough, was one of the foremost to stretch out to him the hand of friendship, but as he remained at college he soon forgot him.

On arriving in London, with the natural promptitude of his character, Troven entered himself of the Temple. Mr. Pearl had recommended him to some of his friends to assist in the work, and remitted to him a sum of money to furnish a set of chambers. In this he was particularly fortunate; he found a set almost ready to receive him; they had been occupied by a gentleman who had lately been called to the bar; and who, though hampered in his circumstances, was foolish enough to hire

other rooms on the faith of the briefs he would receive as a barrister. His old apartments were, in consequence, empty, and while they remained so he incurred a heavier rent than he could afford ; and, like all who are pinched for ready money, he was obliged to make a sacrifice.



CHAPTER VIII.



Our hero was endowed from nature with a bright and elastic spirit, which no grief could sully, nor the weight of any care he had yet borne entirely depress. But when he went to the chambers he had rented, to take up his abode, a passing shadow overcame him like that of the wrack, which momentarily darkens the sunny field, and without being able to assign any cause for his sadness, being alone, he fell into a pensive reverie.

For almost the first time he became impressed with his own situation: with Mr. Pearl and his notable housekeeper he had passed a happy youth; they had never allowed him to recollect how friendless he was; and the worthy old man himself cheered his departure from his only home with joyous anticipations of success and fame. But a thought, rising like a vapour from an abyss, tainted his reflections with distrust, and affected all his cogitations with solemnity.

After yielding for some time to this brown study, he suddenly roused himself from it, and condemned a despondency never felt before, and which his

judgment regarded as a mere cloud that would soon pass away.

In the effort to escape from this momentary depression into which he had fallen, he happened to observe paper and writing materials on his table, and being, as we have already said, innately cheerful and alert, he turned towards them instinctively, and gave vent to his feelings in the following verses, mingling the characteristics of his gaiety with the hue of his spirit.

TO THE MUSE.

Sweet sorceress! in whose haunted bower
My youth has lavished many an hour ;
No more avails thy pleasing art,
The charm dissolves, and we must part.

No more shall I at blush of morn
Find in the spider-woven thorn,
Extended film, or nectar bell,
Ingredients for thy midnight spell.

No more reclined at blazing noon,
Lulled by the roving bee's bassoon ;
See round my head thy menial sprites
Glance from their wings prismatic lights.

Nor, when the evening curtains fall,
And shadows walk the moonlight wall,
Shall I their sable forms detain,
To swell thy visionary train.

For care, the wrinkled hag abhorred,
Doth sadly change my bosom's lord ;
And for thy bright enchanting dreams
Brings sordid, vain, alchemic schemes.

In composing these verses he felt a relief as if the thoughtfulness in which he had indulged had

been a morbid load thrown off by the effort, but his reflections of that time were the parents of a long line. He never, after he had entered those lugubrious chambers in the Temple, was altogether the same man ; so much do trivial accidents affect us. To strangers he presented, perhaps, the same aspect, but to intimates he was evidently altered. A deeper seriousness could be discovered by them at the bottom of his gaiety, and accordingly the quality for which he had hitherto been distinguished and beloved, became secondary and subordinate in the development of more grave endowments.

It is however certain, that he himself was not exactly sensible of the nature of the change. He ascribed it to the influence of the dull domicile which his circumstances had obliged him to choose, and to his habits being formed in the freedom of a country life. It is thus that we deceive ourselves : we suspect not how much moral causes affect us, and often ascribe to the impression of external circumstances the effects of the sediment of feelings which lie heavy and deep on our own hearts.

For some time after Troven had settled himself in his chambers, and delivered the two letters of introduction which he had brought to the agents of Mr. Pearl, he thought himself, without reason, idle and restless. The forenoon was spent in aimless rambles among the curiosities of London, and every thing he had heard spoken of as such, he industriously endeavoured to see. He kept terms assiduously in the hall ; but his evenings were often consumed in his chambers, and alone ; occasionally he went to the play, particularly on the evenings in which Quin performed ; for there was in the style

of that actor something more forensic than in that of Garrick, at the same time he readily acknowledged the superiority of the latter.

“In delivering the bursts of feeling and passion,” said he, “Garrick excels all men; but he affects the emotions of an individual under the calamities of private life: the public orator has to sway others. In Garrick we see how a man would act and feel in situations when he forgot that there were lookers on, and grief was unsheathed; but in Quin there is ever the decorum which a pleader should be capable of showing when he would bend others to his purpose. The former is out of all sight the best actor, but the latter presents a model which the orator can never study too much.”

In the evenings at home, Troven employed himself in reading for a certain time the literature of his profession; but he ever returned at the expiry of that time to works emphatically considered as those of genius; for there was an innate quality of elegance about him which rendered works of taste more acceptable than those studies which a sense of duty imperiously imposed.

This way of life did not, however, last; he began in the hall to form some acquaintance with the students he met at dinner, and first he attracted their notice by the gaiety and good humour with which he afflicted some of those odd and singular characters who may still be found in the halls of the inns of court: but this was an amusement which with such a character could not long prevail; the conceited, the droll, and the eccentric, except where their predominant qualities are distinguished by an union of talent, only afford recreation for a vacant hour;

and in the end he attached himself almost exclusively to one individual, a Mr. Villiers, who was keeping commons, although far advanced in life, and who seemed to shun every other acquaintance. He was indeed a recluse man, and apparently mysterious, at least so much so, that he could not be seen without awakening the curiosity of the spectator.

At first Mr. Villiers shunned the advances of our hero; it perhaps could not be said that he declined his acquaintance, but he evinced singular caution, and slowly unfolded himself.

This reservation had the effect for some time of making Troven very circumspect in what he said, and wary in that silent solicitation which marks a suitor for friendship; but we must also add, that it whetted his curiosity. The constancy of his attentions, however, was soon rewarded; he discovered the symptoms of a thaw towards him, which redoubled his anxieties to become more intimate with so cool and sequestered a character: in the end he had the happiness to find his endeavours crowned with success.

One exceedingly wet evening, when the rain dashed from roofs and gutters, and the streets were nearly deserted, he left the hall with Villiers, who in a cursory manner invited him to come to his chambers hard by. Glad of the invitation in such a night, and still more to have subdued the prejudices of so extraordinary a man, he accepted the invitation.

“You will only get a cup of coffee,” said Mr. Villiers, in a tone as if he repented the invitation he had given.

“It is double,” was the answer, “to what I should find at home; I shall have your company and the coffee-pot more than I expect in my own chambers.”

There was nothing very brilliant in this expression, but it had the effect of better than wit on Mr. Villiers, who indulged in a louder laugh than was his wont, and added —

“You have indeed suggested a very disconsolate picture of a young templar’s life, who intends one day to be eminent.”

By this time they had reached the bottom of the stair which led to Villiers’ chamber, where, directing our hero to follow, he ascended to the attics.

CHAPTER IX.



ON arriving at the chambers, Troven saw by the order in which things were arranged, that it was customary for Villiers' laundress, when he was absent at the hall, to set out his coffee equipage, for he had only, on this occasion, to place an additional cup, which he did before sitting down.

During the time coffee was preparing, and in the process of being drank, there was nothing remarkable in their conversation ; it was trivial, without being gay, and consisted of that sort of topics which are often repeated and never recollected.

As they finished, the woman entered, and, removing the tray, left them to themselves without speaking one word ; a short pause then ensued, which Villiers broke by observing that he seldom invited any body to his chambers, but he had long intended to ask Troven.

" I have," said he, " resolved to make a friend of you, if you will permit me."

" The favour," replied our hero, " is done to me ; I have long desired to obtain your confi-

dence, but feared, from your manner, that in presuming to do so, I had somehow, though unconsciously, given you cause of dislike."

"My declaration," said Villiers, "is an assurance sufficient to convince you of the contrary; but disappointments and misfortunes have made me seem sullen when my heart is palpitating with far other sentiments. From the moment I first observed you at our table, I wished to become acquainted with you, for I like that air of simplicity, blended with superior talent, which every one that sees you will recognize at a glance."

Troven bowed respectfully, for there was a tone of kindness in the speech which at once awed and pleased him.

Some interchange of civil expressions then passed, and Villiers, without giving any formal account of himself, said —

"I dare say you are surprised that one of my years should appear to be keeping terms; but though I dine often with the society, I am too old to do so; too old to begin a profession: the most essential quality to success, ambition, is in me quenched. The only desire that I have now remaining, is a lambent curiosity to view the budding and blossoming of the rising generation. I have been more than two years engaged in this pursuit, but till I saw yourself it has been thriftless."

"You excite my curiosity," said Troven; "for when I first saw you in the hall you attracted my attention, and every day subsequently the interest has increased. It is but acknowledging a truth to say that your age, your taciturnity, and some-

thing like a sequestration from all others, have appeared to me extraordinary."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Mr. Villiers, "because it proves to me that I have awakened your curiosity. I should have been mortified to have found that you had regarded me as a common acquaintance; not that I am in any respect different from other men, but there is a moral affinity which gratifies one's self-love to discover."

"Without flattering your vanity," replied Troven, "you cannot be seen by a stranger without inspiring more curiosity than most men. I have remarked, that some days you enter the hall, dine, and retire without uttering a word; conduct of this kind is not, I believe, often met with."

Villiers smiled and said, "It may not be very often met with; but does it seem to you to arise in me from nature or habit?"

"In truth," replied Troven, "I cannot give you an explicit answer; sometimes I think it proceeds from an innate feeling, at others it looks like the effect of resolution, but undoubtedly there is much of manner in it."

"I am obliged to you for your candour; what you have said is not far from the truth. There may have been originally about me some peculiarity of character, which circumstances have modified, but I am not sure of being actuated by any resolution. It may be, however, that I am; for we often flatter ourselves that we are unremarkable, even with great singularities; but this conversation is on my part too egotistical, and I entreat you to forgive me for making it so."

Troven assured him that all apology was unnecessary; for in his situation the acquisition of any gentleman's friendship was a stroke of good fortune, far more so than the generality of the world could believe.

"Then," replied Villiers, "you will not wince at a little stipulation I would make in our intimacy; perhaps but for that observation I should not have made it at all."

"Let me hear what it is?"

"Why, it is rather an eccentric emanation, I am most happy to make your friendship, and to give you, with sincerity, all that you may require of mine; but the condition is, that you do not endeavour to search out more concerning me than I may be myself disposed to communicate; what you learn by accident I cannot object to, but I hate to be sifted. In truth I have not much to tell; I am what the world calls a disappointed man, but more sinned against than sinning."

"I am glad," said Troven, "that you make the stipulation; I have, in fact, no curiosity about your adventures or vicissitudes, but a great deal about yourself."

"Some time," said Villiers after a pause, "I may tell you what I am; but, in the mean time, believe that my reservation does not arise from the singularities I have to tell—it is the fruit of my reminiscence. I have no pleasure in thinking of the past, and because I cannot talk of it without pain, I prefer to remain silent."

"I have no desire," interrupted Troven, "to afflict you with any questions; let us live together as men are born into the world; we have met, but

we know nothing of the places whence we have come, nor of those to which we go."

"There is something in the observation," replied Villiers, "which falls in with my own humour; but you are a young man; your adventures in life are only beginning: mine are, in a great measure, closed; Experience has taught me; and I may be of use to you in sharing her councils with you when doubt or difficulties arise."

In conversation to this effect the two friends passed the evening together. In the ingenuousness of Troven, Villiers found his misanthropy appeased; indeed, it was with him more habit than passion, and he only required to be withdrawn from the acrimony of his own thoughts, to be, with all his peculiarities, a companionable man. But as the friendship which thence grew up between them had a material effect on the fortunes of our hero, we are obliged at the hazard of being, by some of our readers, deemed a little prolix, to give in the next chapter, something more of what then passed.

CHAPTER X.



MR. VILLIERS continued, “but whatever may have been the influence of incidents on myself, I have learnt one lesson from them and the testimony of years—namely, that however much we may dislike to acknowledge it to ourselves, we become at last persuaded, if not convinced, that the Fate of the inert atheist is, whatever he may imagine to the contrary, but another epithet for that which the sensitive man calls Providence. A man’s visible fortunes are but part and parcel of his whole lot. If his circumstances are to the world disastrous, depend upon it those of his private life are no better.”

“I understand you,” replied Troven; “you would have me infer the general character of your life from the sample.”

“Even so: I regard myself as one of the unfortunate, and what I do not choose to disclose is implied in what I have to tell. He has a morbid mind who seeks for sympathy by making the public his confidant; nor does a discreet man pry into the domestic condition of his neighbour. He observes the colour of the events in which he is en-

gaged, and infers from it the complexion of his private life."

Troven made no answer; he sat ruminating for some time. The remark seemed new; and to convey with delicacy that Villiers had not been more felicitous in his other affairs than in those of public concern.

Villiers also remained silent, and at last said with pensive gaiety—"You have happily used the word sample; to afford a fair criterion it must be drawn from the heart; but do you think that my career has not been sufficiently dismal to justify the recluse and solitary life I lead?"

"I have meant," cried Troven, "only that I hope it has not been so cheerless as to account for the repulsive—I use the word in its gentlest sense—sequestration in which you dwell."

"True," said Villiers, "it may not; I hope you are mistaken; but it is of no common texture, and from what I have said you might have inferred as much; however, as we are on something like a subject of fatalism, I would venture to say that I have seen the forehead mark of those destined to misfortune legibly upon them. There was always, however, comfort in the observation; for I have remarked that those who had it, conducted themselves rather by rule than impulse—mistaking the desire to be good and great, without possessing the endowment of talent requisite; their life was one continued series of attempts, and each a failure, till disappointment begat melancholy—that became a habitude. But it is not of such I speak; all I would say is, that the world is governed by good and ill fortune, independently of ought in

conduct which an individual has the power of regulating. It is not revealed to us wherefore this is; and our human eyes may see in it only a blasphemous caprice; but another state of being will correct the hallucinations of the earth."

"I hope it will," said Troven; "but I have had no experience of the ills of life; my days hitherto have been cloudless, and I have never tasted misfortune, nor ever heard a story calculated to breed despondency."

"How!" exclaimed Villiers, "have I not been told aright, that you were a foundling?"

"I am; but in being so I am not at this moment sensible of having suffered harm. I was found a child, weeping on a common the tears forgot as soon as shed. My rags were so very poor that they wakened a suspicion of my having been garnished with other clothing; but as no search was ever made for me, this notion melted away, and in the kindness of the old gentleman that brought me up, I knew not that parental love could have been sweeter; all in my path was bright; and when I heard of others overwhelmed with disasters, it was as the far-off sound of the hoarse sea-shore."

"Then rejoice," cried Villiers, "your fate seems to be happily cast; as it has been, so it is probable it may be."

"Amen," said Troven, adding in a less solemn tone, "you are a fortune-teller. Although I have had my fancies about you, I never yet imagined you were so."

"No," said Villiers gravely, "it was not likely from the easy, good-natured characters with whom

you were brought up, that you would give credit to so much prescience.

“Then you knew them,” replied Troven; “they were indeed excellent persons. Mr. Pearl is, I think, exactly what a man should be, only he takes too good-natured a view of the world; and as for Mrs. Servit, she is the paragon of animals, blithe and obliging, and yet with a strength of character not often seen.”

Villiers smiled at this eulogium, and seemed for a moment to regard our hero with benignity. “In sooth,” said he “I shall be a sorcerer next in your opinion, for I have never seen your friends, nor have I heard whence you came or where they reside; but I am taught to believe, as I have said, that fortune is all of a piece, and I infer from the blandishments of early life you so gratefully acknowledge, that it was in all things accordant and auspicious to your future career.

Troven, very much affected by the manner in which this was uttered, could not at once make any reply; but soon after he recovered his self-possession, and said jocularly in manner, but really with seriousness:

“Then I may think, notwithstanding the sunshine in which my youth was spent, that I am destined to no common career, for, to the happiness I have enjoyed, I have to reckon the friendship of a very singular man.”

“Yes,” said Villers emphatically, “and his first advice to you is, never attempt to guide the stream of your fortunes, heaven will do that for its own purposes, but in every situation do your utmost and your best, leaving the result to providence.”

Troven saw that Villiers was not altogether the kind of person he had imagined ; instead of the sour and misanthropical character for which he had set him down, he found a shrewd and practical man, one who had retired from the world, not entirely with disgust, but who had tasted its bitterness and felt that he was unable with equanimity to swallow the contents of his allotted chalice. There was no doubt something about him which appeared a little inexplicable, namely, those disasters which made his domestic life partake of the lees which embittered his public fortune ; but he spoke of them unaffectedly, and, without specifying the rule by which he was governed, made his auditor sensible that they could not be described without a violation of propriety.

This circumstance dwelt on his mind, and before his departure for the night, he enquired hesitatingly, why private cares should be withheld from public sympathy.

Villiers, before giving any answer, looked at him severely ; he was not offended at the question, but evidently thought it impertinent, and said, with an accent of sternness, —

“ Do you ask that question from curiosity, or do you wish to learn a rule that all wise men observe ? as you speak frankly so shall be my answer.”

Troven was abashed by his fervency, but seeing at once the justness of his determination, replied,

“ How can I hope to make you believe me ? If I say from motives of curiosity, I will justly merit almost the forfeiture of that friendship which I hope will in future exist between us ; and if I tell the truth, will you believe me ? At the risk of both

of these painful alternatives, I confess that I am actuated by the desire of knowing what you think entitles domestic circumstances to be more hallowed than others."

"I believe you," said Villiers; "and I say so with energy. It is because in domestic circumstances the game is not equal. In the first place man has to deal with a weaker vessel, and his children, where there is no delinquency, are called to respect their mother quite as much as their father. It does not follow, where the worth is undisputed, they should know any cause of difference. Household happiness does not rest on attachment, nor its reverse arise from delinquency. It is a thing of taste and humours, and the operation of its bane can only be mitigated by a forbearance which cannot be taught; by a natural tact which no effort can acquire, and without which no virtues can assuage the troubles of life."

CHAPTER XI.

NEXT morning Troven received a letter sealed with black wax, and, by the superscription, he saw it was from Mrs. Servit, and augured, from its appearance, that it contained no good intelligence. When he opened it his worst fears were confirmed. It announced to him the sorrowful news that his benefactor, Mr. Pearl, was no more ; but we shall give the good matron's own account of the event, and offer no comment on her sad tale, premising only that her letter affords a very fair specimen of the literary accomplishment which prevailed at that time among her class in the well educated regions of Scotland.

“ MY DEER MR. EDWARD,

“ This comes hoppin you r very wel and in elth, to let you know that Mr. Pearl my kine freen an yoor's is, efter a sour strugle, in A-braw-ham's buzom in Pairadice. He had bean komplanen for sum days afore but was better, thank God for it, and bein a vast dale empruvd he kame doun stirs to take a dish of tee with i, and we was most

jokoz in the old wey, when he gav a lood skrech and fel bak in his share. I lokit in a frite at him, he was a dreedful site to behold, his heed hangin bac and his muth open, with his upre teeth stanin out in a tereebel menre. I seaing this kryd to the lasses, an they kame ringin their hans wen they sa im. So i sint Mollie for the pottykary and the ministre Dr. Whycome, thincken he was in a fight, an note in the jas of deth wich we must all bend our nees to in God's good tim. The pottycarie he kam runing with his lance in his han and too bottles o purg in his pocket, but Dr. Whycom he sade to Mollie it was of no yoos for im to go, if Mr. Pearl was dead, an if he was stil aliv he might get better an show us all what it is in the power of Providence to doo, speshalie as the nite was wet an most unshootabel for a Kristian to poot his nozz out in.

“ I hav ritten to Mr. Ezra Pearl the lawer that mad the wil, of the Lord's dooing here, an in the meen tim I have with witnessces seeld every drar and disque heed in the hos with peppers til efter the funerall, at wich I expec yoo, an no dout yoo wil be greeved to heer al this, for it is a warnin an munishon to us to thinck of oor lattre en wich no man can yskap from whoo dras the breth of lyf in this orld.

“ Wen al is ovre an he is led in the churchyird mools, it is my intent to go amung my freens in Scotland, where I will spen the rezedoo of my pyllcramach, butt I wil sea yoo her and we sal dizcoors anent it, for I luk to yoo as a sun an air.

“ Dr. Whycom lukit ovre this mournin, and he was to al intents and porpusses seeminlye a most

affected man, and said a paternoster wen he saw the corp that was very pityful to heer, butt if he is a senseer man Heeven nos tho I hav a missdoot on that heed.

“Wen yee com doun I wish yoo wood bring me a pes of bumbeseen, for there is noon but a coorss sort here in the villach, wich to be shoor is an oongry place to by any thing in for an okashon.

“The funorall is to be on Tysday, I was for Foorsday, butt it was the pinion of Mrs. Whycome and other creditabel leddies that oor deer deperted freen wood not keep so lon, wich was the because of my fixen on the erlier day, therefore I expec yoo by the coch on Sattreday nite, an yoo wil find the blew rume reddy for yoo, which yoo hav a good rite to as I herd oor benifaktre say not long before the spirrit left his boddy sittin in the postre I have told yoo he dyed in. No more at pressent, for my pepper is dun and my pen is a very bad speller, so adoo. Your loving friend till death,

JANET SERVIT.”

Troven, when he read this epistle, in spite of the spelling, was deeply grieved; his regret for Mr. Pearl was very sincere, — habit had knit him in affection to the mild old man, and reason confirmed that he owed him much. He lost no time, in consequence, in preparing for the journey; and as Mrs. Servit anticipated, he was set down at the gate. She received him with her accustomed gladness, softened, however, by a constrained decorum which death in the house obliged her to assume; but it went off, in a great measure, in the course of the evening, and he endured her con-

gratulations on a legacy with a moderation of satisfaction that became the general cheerfulness of his character.

But he spent the night wakefully. The amount of Mr. Pearl's fortune was not known; rumour spoke of it as large, and our hero set it down as a competency to an old man who had but himself to provide for. He, therefore, regarded it as not, by the amount that would come to him, likely to alter his predetermined course of life, while he would be enabled probably to pursue his profession without enduring those cramps and hamperings which were, to one in his circumstances, inevitable.

He rose betimes, and leisurely, before Mrs. Servit was stirring, walked out to view the scenes of his childhood, and the dreary wilds of the common on which he had been found a forlorn child; but, whatever at any other time these things were calculated to have made him feel, they recalled only pleasurable emotions, and, without a sentiment of gaiety, he was far from being sad.

He renewed in memory the sportive feats in which he had contended with youthful companions whom he might never meet again; but it was pleasant to think that they were then striving for the goal of fortune, and he amused himself with wondering what might be their different lots. A light and bounding joy for a time filled all his thoughts; for he was but a young man at the starting post of his career, and disappointment of any kind had not taught him to moralize on the evanescence of hope, or to lament that those whom he had seen jocund and playful were driven by adversity into the shadows and chill places of life.

On the common, however, his reflections were more serious ; he thought of his abandoned infancy, how much he owed to Mr. Pearl, whose kindness could be no longer of any avail, and that, but for his post obit generosity, which he was now led to expect in a legacy, how bleak and shelterless his outset in the world had been.

His loneliness had never so affected him before. He felt for himself; and, for the first time too, he was sensible, like Mr. Villiers, that talents are only blessed with half their efficiency when they are without patronage and the heralding of connections who feel their own interests involved in the result.

In this frame of mind, he walked desultory and alone on the common, musing on his prospects and ruminating on the past. It was a bright and breezy day ; the birds of song carolled as in a gayer season, but the wind swept coldly along the open fields, and hissed, as it were, in the furze, which rose in golden knolls around him.

In an open space, where the village-maidens were in the practice of bleaching and sunning their linen, he met Dr. Wycombe, who was then returning from his morning walk : their encounter was pleasant, our hero forgot, in the moment, his dislike of the Doctor's cold pomposity; and the Doctor at that time, to do him justice, had but a faint recollection that Troven was only a foundling. They greeted each other with warmth and cordiality, and the Reverend Doctor condoled with him for the loss sustained by the neighbourhood in the death of Mr. Pearl.

“ But,” said he, “ the old man has, I under-

stand, died without near relations ; however, we shall soon know all the truth. 'Mr. Ezra Pearl, who is but a third cousin, has been invited to the funeral, and will read the will after we have seen the interment. He speaks of it as a document that reflects honour on the feelings of his relation, and has never scrupled to mention with what kindness all the friends abroad have been recollected ; I hope he has fulfilled his promise to me that he would bequeath a legacy for the re-edification of the parish church."

In discourse of this kind the Doctor and Troven returned home ; before parting, after a few suitable reflections, the Doctor invited our hero to dinner, remarking that, although he did not that day intend to go to church, he might come to dinner ; but, by this time, the dislike of Troven to the arrogant and self-sufficient Dominie had returned with all its force, and he declined the invitation. At the same time he thought afterwards on the familiarity of the Doctor as something uncommon, which he could not well explain : it made him feel, in the instant, as if he had been treated by his Reverence with greater equality and freedom than he had ever experienced from him before.

" Deuce take mankind," said he, " if a little more gilded trash can produce such changes ;" for he ascribed the seeming cordiality of the Doctor to a belief that he was left a legacy, and he had long before noticed the sordid bias of his disposition.

CHAPTER XII.

TROVEN, unable to divine the cause which induced Mrs. Servit to summon him to be at Mr. Pearl's house on the Saturday night, was, merely from that circumstance, restless and uneasy; his walks on Sunday had satisfied all his longings to visit his only home, and there was nothing either in the manner or information of Dr. Wycombe that in the slightest degree interested him; for, although he had been many years the pupil of that gentleman, in whom he had discernment to see, before he entered the world, that he was more indebted to the regularity with which nature worked in him constitutionally, than to the conclusions of an understanding pitched on an agreeable key, he yet never regarded him with confidential feelings. Of the other neighbours he knew little; they were common-place kind of people, who had their best dinner on Sunday, and no variety in their conversation all the week. In consequence, he found himself under no obligation to wait upon them, nor was it the practice at that time for such a methodical race to wait upon him. Sunday, accordingly,

passed in quietude with Mrs. Servit ; but, whether the collision of London, or a slight inflection of his own character, produced by a different mode of life since he left home, we shall not venture to say, while obliged to confess he thought that matronly lady somewhat changed in her manners, and not to any advantage. In truth, his residence in the metropolis, where he was planted among strangers, and all things around him were strange, had hastened the development of his character ; he was himself altered without being conscious of it, and thought the good lady had suffered some deterioration which was rather felt than susceptible of being conveyed in words ; but she had undergone no mutation ; she was in all things the same that he had left, and the coarser lineaments which he now discovered, were only the effects of a discernment that a greater knowledge of the world enabled him to exercise.

On the Monday morning, he was, however, still convinced that she was actuated by some purpose in asking him to come so long before the funeral ; her silence during Sunday did not surprise him, he recollected her Scottish habitual respect for the Lord's day, and to it ascribed her abstinence from temporal talk. On Monday she appeared less scrupulous, and with nods and becks, and wreathed smiles, she showed by her looks, though there was a dead body, as she said, in the house, that her mind was pregnant. Something in her manner at breakfast, on the first day of weekly labour, convinced him of this ; but, suspecting after all, that it could not be very vital to him whether he knew the secret or not, he seemed more insensible to her

hints, than he altogether felt. At last, unable to contain herself longer, she proposed that he should marry her niece, to whom she intended to bequeath her gathering ; and, to render the proposition more acceptable, she allowed him to infer how instrumental she had been in convincing Mr. Pearl that the residue of his fortune, after his numerous testimonials to old friends, could not be better bestowed than on one to whom he had been so kind, and whose boyish pranks and sprightly youth had contributed so essentially to sweeten his latter days.

Before Troven could make any reply to her proposition, Mr. Ezra Pearl came in, the same whom we have mentioned as the attorney who had made the will. Though far removed, he was yet the nearest kinsman of the deceased, and he had inferred from Mrs. Servit's message, asking him in so particular a manner to attend the funeral, that she had seen the will and approved of its provisions: a very short conversation however, convinced him of his mistake; she appeared only to know that the deceased had intended to leave legacies of remembrance to his friends abroad.

Mr. Ezra Pearl was a little disappointed on observing her understanding of the document, but he said nothing, nor did he afterwards affect any privilege arising from a kinsman to the dead. Mr. Ezra Pearl merits, however, a more particular description, both on account of the part he played among our *dramatis personæ*, and the high pedestal on which he stood in his own opinion.

He was a corpulently inclined elderly man, with a tye-wig powdered, Ionic curls over his ears, a

silk handkerchief round his throat over his neck-cloth, and with a saturnine complexion was a respectable person for his years. It was impossible, however, though dressed in black, to mistake his profession; we know that there are light-minded people in the world, apt to think there is not that professional air to which we allude, but we consider them who think so as shallow observers. Nothing is more obvious in the city of London, for example, than that merchants and solicitors as they are called, are marked as two separate races. It is not easy to tell the difference between them, and yet it is very palpable. They both wear broad-cloth, and the latter, somewhat of a grave cut and colour, do for the most part take snuff. There is, however, that between them which is still more distinguishing, and yet in what it consists the keenest observer cannot exactly tell.

It thus happened that our hero, at the first glance, recognised the profession of the unIntroduced guest, and, without being able to explain how such an untimely apparition should have molested him, he was molested; and yet there was nothing in the conversation of Mr. Ezra Pearl likely to have given him the least alarm; alarmed, however, he was, or perhaps it would be more consistent to say disturbed, and Mrs. Servit was no less so; but Mr. Ezra Pearl conducted himself with the greatest propriety, and exceedingly regretted lest he had come a day too soon; but, said he, "the weather this morning was so fine."

It was showery and dank, however, as far back as Mrs. Servit and our hero could recollect, and that was till daylight, — a small mistake which

he accidentally committed, and which, in no slight degree, added to the perplexity that his first appearance had so inexplicably occasioned.

But Mr. Ezra Pearl was a sensible man; he made many observations that partook of this quality; what he said might not be new or brilliant; we will not undertake to avouch it was, but the day passed with him pleasantly, and he could rehearse much of the last gazette. Upon the whole he proved a conversable companion; Mrs. Servit, however, did not expect him till the funeral day, and was rather incommoded by his presence, which materially interfered with her household thrift, and could have been dispensed with.

Our hero was still more incommoded; the visit was ill-timed, and there was something which he could not name that made him dissatisfied with the visitor especially as he talked of many things; but of the will which he had himself made, he opened not his mouth; indeed, if words were always proofs of a profession, Mr. Ezra Pearl spoke much more like a clergyman than a limb of the law; he said so many fine things concerning the dispensations of providence; the lot of humanity and all that, which is so edifying to hear. At last the day ran down, and he could not but be invited to remain all night; to do him justice, he plainly expected it, for he never declined the offer; and, a clear proof of his predetermination, even before the invitation was given, he had intimated that his boots pinched, and that his feet would be the better when they were set at liberty.

CHAPTER XIII.



THE longer we live, and the more we know of the world, some say our misanthropy encreases; as wine becomes flat and acid by exposure. Experience, however, teaches the reverse; we grow, perhaps, more hard-hearted, and encase ourselves, as it were, in a shell; grow more testaceous, as the naturalists say, and act on the defensive; but we discern that it is not so much against man we need protection, as from the necessity by which he is driven. Human nature is individually better than we are disposed to think, notwithstanding its collective character requires all our art to ward off its remorseless assaults. We do not, by age or knowledge, sour into misanthropy; we only come to know man better, and see clearer how much he is the agent of circumstances, ordained in their order by fate or Providence. But it is time to return to our narrative, although sepulture is a solemn subject, and calls forth moral reflections.

At the hour appointed, the interment of Mr. Pearl took place, and with the exception of our hero there were none of the burial guests who felt

with sincerity his loss. They were all that day, good easy men, to whom the calamities of life that touched not themselves, passed as things of course; every one of them knew that death was the lot of all, and if he did not feel it was his, he had the good sense to pretend he did, and “assumed a virtue though he had it not.”

When the ceremony was over, a few selected friends were invited to see the seals with which Mrs. Servit had carefully secured the drawers and escrutoires broken, and to hear the will read. No great number was assembled, but the parlour presented a solemn scene. The lady was weeping, at least she held a cambric handkerchief to her face; Dr. Wycombe was grimly serious; Troven thought of the obligation he owed to his old friend; and Mr. Ezra Pearl, by whom the will was drawn, was as a man in whose face the world might see strange matters. He was not particularly at any time talkative, on this occasion he was taciturn beyond his nature; and being professional, was scrupulous that every thing should be suitable and done in order.

When the guests had reposed the proper time, and refreshed themselves after their duties in the churchyard, Mr. Ezra Pearl signified, by a bow to Dr. Wycombe, our hero, and another gentleman, that it was time to proceed to business; accordingly, they went together with Mrs. Servit, to the old gentleman's private apartment, and beheld monuments of her care in large patches of sealing-wax on every door and drawer, some with long legs run from them had the shape of semibreves.

The gentlemen had not to search long: in the

escrutoire which was first opened they found the will, and returned at once into the room where the other guests were waiting, and resumed their seats with awe and silence. This being done, Mr. Ezra Pearl remarked, that as the nearest of kin, it was his painful duty to read the document, adding —

“ I believe myself already thoroughly acquainted with its contents, but it is proper that all the law requires should be fulfilled.”

Accordingly, he sedately put on his spectacles, on the instrument for which we wear spectacles, and began —

The preamble of the will was in the usual style ; it related that the testator was in good health, but it also adverted to the uncertainty of life, and how all men are bound to think of its transitory nature. It was very affecting to Mrs. Servit, and she gave a loud sob, and pressed her cambric handkerchief to dry her watery eyes.

After some other unimportant remarks, the bequeathing of the legacies succeeded ; the list of friends abroad to whom tokens of kindness were left, was very considerable ; none of these, however, exceeded fifty pounds ; and though the list showed a kind remembrance, the legacies severally were, to the different gentlemen mentioned, not important. Then came a provision for an annual sum to Mrs. Servit, which bespoke a good opinion of the manner she had performed her tasks and duties. All present congratulated her on this testimony to her worth, but she herself was so affected, that she could only weep and sob in a very audible manner.

Mr. Ezra Pearl, when a necessary pause had

been allowed, resumed the reading without changing his voice, and read of a legacy to himself of double the amount of those to the other legatees, with the exception of the annuity to Mrs. Servit. This, all observed, was very judiciously done, and Dr. Wycombe pronounced a just eulogium on the deceased. Then the attorney read the clause that was so important to our hero; an acquittal of all the expenses of his education, &c. was freely given. Dr. Wycombe said it was most extraordinary generosity, and expressed his astonishment when he heard immediately after the same legacy bequeathed to him that had been to Mr. Ezra Pearl.

“That,” said the legal instrument, “is all that is said here, and of course I am the heir at law, and entitled to the residue.”

At this it was observed, that Mrs. Servit took the handkerchief from her eyes, and looking at him curiously from beneath her brows, said —

“Ye had better read likewise the codicil over the leaf, as Mr. Pearl himself laid to with his own hand that outshot.”

Mr. Ezra Pearl changed colour at this; his sallow complexion took the hue of paleness; however, he turned over the leaf, and read in the same tone, but in a tremulous voice, a codicil in the handwriting of the deceased, declaring that it was his intention, after giving a specific legacy to the young man, Edward Troven, who was well known as his true-hearted friend, to make him his residuary legatee; that, contrary to his instructions, the clause had been omitted by Mr. Ezra Pearl, who drew up the will, and that he was constrained

in this manner to make his intention known, and, with his own holograph, to bequeath the residue to the aforesaid young man.

At this crisis, Mrs. Servit, who was looking stedfastly at the attorney, gave a great shout, clapping her hands. He fell back in his chair smitten with consternation, but in a few minutes recovered, and, rumpling up the parchment on which the will was drawn, showed that the desire to destroy it was kindled in his heart. It deserves to be recorded, that it was at his suggestion that the document, to increase the price, was written on vellum instead of paper. However, his astonishment did not last long, for Dr. Wycombe rose from his seat and snatched the important document from his grasp; but he was none daunted, and said, as it was taken from him, with an affectation of coolness —

“It is of no consequence; I deny that the writing is my kinsman’s; it bears, no doubt, something of his character, and I will not, if there be law in England, give up my right.”

The gentlemen present heard this declaration, and looked at one another, but the Doctor was the first who broke silence. He rose with the will in his hand, and, stepping forward two paces, presented it to our hero, and, with well accentuated phraseology, congratulated him on his good luck in succeeding to an inheritance which placed him at once in moderate independence.

While he was speaking, the attorney also rose, and huffily quitted the room, with all the airs of a person justly offended. Mrs. Servit, no less ardent than the Reverend Doctor in her congra-

tulations, told our hero, before the whole assemblage, that he might thank her ; for, on the night that her old friend died, a misgiving arose in her mind respecting the will, and she advised him, when he mentioned that he had never read it, to look it carefully over. Giving her the key of his deskhead, she brought it to him, and lo and behold, he saw that the clause, which bequeathed the residue of his fortune, was left out. “ An angry man was he, as the song sings,” said she ; “ and I, bringing him pen and ink, he wrote the just *Nota Bene* which we have all heard this day.”

The fact was as the worthy lady stated, and was the cause of those important looks which our hero had noticed, and the secret reason, besides partiality, which had induced her to offer him her niece in marriage.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. EZRA Pearl was one of those demi-adroit men who abound in the world, and of whom the more knowing say, their knavery only over-reaches themselves. Before the event which we have related, he enjoyed a respectable reputation, and, though not much liked, he possessed an extensive good character, with, however, a slight flaw that was obvious to the eyes of reflection.

From the time his kinsman returned from abroad he accounted himself his heir, and, in consequence, paid him those attentions with assiduity which became his situation; but, although the old man took his character from report, he never much relished his company: they became acquaintances indeed, but never intimates.

Among many unwise transactions in which Ezra Pearl engaged after the arrival of his kinsman, was a liberal settlement made on the marriage of his son, on the faith of his inheritance; and this was the cause and temptation which led him into the commission of a deception which the good-natured world could never sufficiently condemn.

One bad act is the forerunner of another ; he saw that his character was gone if he submitted to acknowledge the authenticity of the codicil : no doubt he would have proved himself a wiser man had he done so, but his settlement on his son was more than he could afford from his own means, and he was driven, in consequence of the failure of his hope, to act as he did. By one ill deed he was led to worse ; and, accordingly, before the gentlemen who had attended to hear the will read had departed, he retired to the neighbouring inn from which, with his own hand, he wrote to Troven his intention to throw the whole business at once into Chancery, and to dispute the validity of the codicil.

He expected by this promptitude to rescue his reputation and to evince his suspicion of a fraud ; but haste is not always speed ; Mrs. Servit had, before his letter arrived, told her story, and the consequence was, that a strong prejudice was excited against him, and which his letter, instead of softening only, served to make more austere. His character at the moment was gone, and Dr. Wycombe shook his head ; but in the course of a few minutes the reverend Doctor changed his mood, and without speaking, recollected that our hero had come longer before the funeral than was necessary, and had declined his hospitable invitation on Sunday, all which were ominous circumstances as he thought, which should be well considered, before the character of a man who had reached so far in life with an unblemished reputation, should be wrecked.

When the Doctor went home and told the result

to his wife, he added, that a great deal might be said on both sides of the question, and was curious to know what had induced Troven, who was so little acquainted with the way in which the will was drawn up, as not to know it, to be on the spot two days before the seals were opened.

To Troven himself the discovery of the attorney's baseness, enhanced as it was by many circumstances which Mrs. Servit related, appeared unequivocal, at the same time the uncertainty of the law rendered the threat a serious molestation. All the brilliant hopes which had blazed up when the will was read were suddenly quenched; brief as the flames which a breath extinguishes, or as the blight withers a garland plucked from the spray, or as the glow of the cloud at the moment when the sun sets, or as the beam of the meteor that expires in the sky, or as the melody that ends with the diapason, or as the fragrance of the lily that perishes with the flower, or as the blossom that never sets in fruit, and all the hopes of man that are never realized; or, as Burns says more picturesquely of pleasure:

"Pleasure is like poppies spread;
We seize the flower, the bloom is shed;
Or like the Borealis race,
That flit ere we can point the place;
Or like the snow-flake in the river,
A moment white and gone for ever;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amidst the storm."

The remainder of the day was the most unhappy Troven had yet endured; he had no fortune to

withstand the attorney ; independence seemed flourishing in his reach, but it was removed, like the feast of Tantalus, in the tasting.

We shall not attempt to describe how he spent the time. Mrs. Servit was neither to bind nor to hold ; she saw, wherever she turned her eyes, but monuments of man's roguery, and her unceasing complaints would have been almost ludicrous, had she not pathetically recollected the needs of old age, the fruitlessness of her life, and the price, in cheerful toil, which she had paid for the food and raiment that she was never to attain.

It occurred to our hero, in the midst of his doleful ruminations, that he ought to take no step without friendly advice ; but, in all the inhabitants of what he considered his native place, there was not one to whom he could apply. As a foundling they deemed him greatly fortunate in obtaining the patronage of Mr. Pearl, and it was natural to imagine that his kinsman had a better right to inherit the fortune : he was again, as he exclaimed to himself, forsaken on a dreary common, and, unless Providence was pleased to send help, he was alone, defenceless, and in danger. But just as these words escaped him, he recollected Villiers, and, with the wonted alacrity of his character, he resolved to return to London and to lay his case and situation openly before that remarkable man.

Resolution and action with Troven always went together. The same evening he watched for the coach, and returned with it to London. Early in the morning he arrived and went directly to his own chamber, where he expected to refresh himself with sleep before waiting on Villiers, but he

could not close his eyes : he tossed on his couch in such a manner that he scared it from settling on his eyelids. He thought of his situation and of the wealth he might possess by incurring a little outlay ; but where was the amount of that outlay to come from. In all the wide earth he saw not one to whom he could apply for assistance, and the fortune before him seemed of such stuff as dreams are made of—a luminous phantom that vanished from his grasp.

But time never stopped, and the hour arrived in its appointed course in which he had determined to see Villiers ; he rose, feverish and in some degree ghastly with the fatigue of his night-travelling and the irksome hours in which he had in vain solicited sleep.

It was a grey and louring day, and its aspects were not enlivened within the courts of the Temple ; all things seemed to partake of the gloom and settled sadness of his mind ; “ And yet,” said he to himself as he walked towards Villiers’ chambers, “ why should I feel so depressed ? my condition is no worse than if the old man had longer lived ; and though I acknowledge the kindness of his intentions, in what am I less able to bear this disappointment than if he had not made me his heir ? I ought to have rejoiced when I heard that he accounted the expense I had incurred but as a gift, and his specific legacy was more than I could have expected ; and yet I am grieved and smitten with an unwholesome mourning because he has left me all : a few trivial bequests to others mark the greatness of his regard for me.”

By this time he had reached Villiers’ door ; and,

with a knock to give signal within, he pushed it open and at once entered. Villiers was at breakfast, and, surprized at his appearance, rose abruptly to welcome him ; but his looks were so altered that he forgot his intention and received him with a solemnity that was impressive.

“ You are much changed ;” said he, “ I trust it is nothing of the mind that affects you.”

Troven took hold of his hand and said, with a smile that made his words emphatic.

“ It is of the mind : strange things have come to pass since we parted, and I am here to ask your advice.”

Villiers made no reply ; but pointing to a chair, requested Troven to be seated, and invited him to partake of his breakfast.

CHAPTER XV.



OUR hero related all the incidents of his excursion with a degree of calmness honorable to his self-possession ; when, however, he described the reading of the will, a slight degree of emotion was discernible in his voice. At the conclusion he said abruptly, "What am I to do?"

Villiers made no answer for some time ; he sat evidently ruminating, much distressed ; and at last enquired whether he wanted a legal opinion or a moral one ; "for," said he, "what is legally right may be morally wrong, and I do not feel myself very well qualified to be your counsellor in this matter."

"I do not ask you," said Troven, "professionally ; but I am friendless, and I know not whose advice I should follow ; of this I am certain, that whether Mr. Ezra Pearl did act rightly or wrongly, he knows now that he deserves from me no forbearance, because he not only endeavoured to deprive me of my fortune, but also to blight my character : the one cannot be withheld in the case between us, without the other becoming tainted."

Villiers took no notice of this, but enquired what sort of person Mrs. Servit was.

Troven gave a true sketch of her history, her character, and her honesty.

"Very well;" replied Villiers, "and you believe that she was incapable both from principle and ability of forging the codicil?"

"I do!" said Troven a little more than firmly, because the question implied a doubt of her integrity, of which, never in many years had she given him reason to entertain any."

"This is a bad business," said Villiers, "but do not let it vex you too much. On the law of the case trust not to me; choose one better informed; but I can give you advice that may be adopted as to the moral."

Our hero said that his poverty did not allow him to enter the lists of a law-suit; moreover, Mr. Ezra Paul had *à priori*, a better right to the inheritance.

"So says the law, I believe," said Villiers, "but I think otherwise; your old friend went into the world penniless, he had inherited nothing, and all he ultimately possessed grew from himself, and was righteously his own. This attorney, who has marred for the present his kind intentions, he knew not, as you have told me, till his return; it, therefore, seems very clear to me, that no obligation existed or was implied, that he should leave him any part of his fortune: that, I believe, is a fair moral estimate of the case; therefore, give yourself no uneasiness about it, but consider how you can best wrestle with the law."

"How can I?" cried Troven.

“I cannot well advise you on that score,” said Villiers, “but it is very clear that a little art is wanted to effectually resist a great deal, and *that* you must practise.”

“How! if Mr. Ezra Pearl act fraudulently, is it any warranty for me to do the same?”

“No, certainly,” replied his companion; “but I would have you appear in this business more as a man of the world than you seem at present disposed from your temperament to be.”

“Tell me,” said Troven, “all you would advise, and I shall be the better able to say how I can follow your advice.”

“Well, then,” cried Villiers, “I will do so, and trust that you will listen to me patiently. No objection, as you have said, was made to any of the provisions of the will, till Mrs. Servit disclosed the unexpected codicil.”

“Even so,” said Troven; “and she was only led to speak of it by an assurance received from the old man himself, that the important clause in my favor had been omitted in the document.”

“This is something,” said Villiers. “What I think you are called upon by justice to do is this: propose to Mr. Ezra Pearl that all the legacies should be settled, and the authenticity of the codicil made the only question; he will then stand precisely after this settlement as he does now.”

“I would do it gladly,” said Troven, “but will he?”

“I think he will,” replied Villiers, solemnly. “The legacies must be settled in that way, whatever becomes of the codicil; and depend upon it, I have not read the volume of the human heart with pro-

per judgment if he do not, for, by so doing, he will bespeak golden opinions of all sorts of men ; and he is not one, who, from your description, does not know the value of a good opinion. Do this, and when you have received your answer I shall be in a condition to give you more advice, but, mind, I do not offer it as sound law."

The same day our hero made the proposition to Mr. Ezra Pearl, every word of his letter was weighed and well chosen, and when it was finished he submitted the draft to Villiers, who greatly applauded the temper and style.

In the meantime the attorney was exceedingly busy : he knew something of the pecuniary stake at issue in the game he was playing, and he had also heard that swift-winged rumours were spread abroad, and babbled of his character. On receipt of the letter he was greatly surprised, and swallowed with avidity the bait which was thrown to him ; he perceived at once all the advantages of compliance which Mr. Villiers apprehended, and by the return of the post he wrote a " Dear Sir " answer, assenting with frankness to what was proposed.

Troven was surprised that Villiers had so well guessed the result, and carried to him the answer, requesting his further advice. That shrewd man read it carefully over, and smiled sardonically at the warmth of the expression ; he then folded it carefully up, and returned it, saying drily —

" Now, by this post you will inform this deceitful man how much his ready acquiescence has given you pleasure, and advise him that you have drawn this day, this very day, for your legacy."

“ I am in your hands,” said our hero, “ and will implicitly follow your advice.”

He accordingly drew the bill, wrote as he had been prompted, and in two days more he was in possession of his legacy, with which in his hand, he waited again on Villiers.

“ This,” said the man of experience, “ has been brought about in a very satisfactory manner ; but wait till you have heard that the other bequests are equally as well settled, then come to me again and we shall see what is to be done.”

Mr. Ezra Pearl was an active man of business, and did not allow the grass to grow beneath his tread ; the other legacies were soon paid off, and Mrs. Servit’s annuity formally recognized ; nor was it in this stage of the business possible to give the indefatigable attorney ought but unqualified praise.

As soon as it was ascertained that the will which he had drawn was punctually carried into effect, and nought remained with him but to prove the forgery of the codicil, Troven called on Villiers.

“ All goes well, and as I would wish,” said Villiers ; “ you are now master of a sum of money ; it will enable you to pay a solicitor and counsel ; go to the best you know, tell them your case, and resolve to challenge to the uttermost this Ezra Pearl.”

“ Can I do that ?” cried Troven—“ can I fight him with his own money ?”

“ My young friend,” replied his companion, “ you labour under a mistake ; it is not his money you have received, it is a part of Mr. Pearl’s fortune, to which no one ever made any objection to

pay you ; it is your own money, and respecting it, now that it is in your possession, you require no advice. Do as I bid you, and prove if you can, the authenticity of the codicil."

" Had you told me," said Troven, " all this process at once, I might not have followed your advice ; but I acknowledge its wisdom, and yet, to confess the truth, I am not very well satisfied with what I have done."

" Is any man wronged by what you have done ?"

" No," replied Troven, " and what I have received was my own, whether he can prove the forgery or not."

" Then trouble yourself no more about it. Had there been any thing of wrong or guilt in what you have done, your own breast, my young friend, would be the first to upbraid you ; be content, you have only made yourself master of the vantage-ground, and if your measures are well directed, if your assurances are to be credited, you cannot miss your aim."

In this manner Troven, by the advice of Villiers, was raised into a condition to contend for his right : in the end his right to be acknowledged as the residuary legatee was confirmed with the usual expedition for which a chancery suit is so celebrated, and, therefore, that we may not have occasion again to speak on the subject, he died in old age, and about twenty years after his decease his heirs became invested in the rights which belonged to him.

In the mean time his condition was not improved. While keeping terms, he applied his legacy in prosecuting his suit, and maintained him-

self, like many other students, by his literary contributions to the periodicals : but in this pursuit his friend Villiers acknowledged himself incapable of affording him equal efficient advice. "The author of what I have written," said he, "is unknown, and so shall remain ; for hitherto I have withstood the calls of vanity to reveal myself, and laboured not for fame, but bread. My hopes of this world are done ; year after year those that were my friends became rarer ; the aspect of things is no longer the same that I worshipped in youth ; I merely endure to live, because I do not yet know the purpose for which I am here. In my dreams I thought myself destined for a bright career ; but every effort has been ineffectual, and I am weary of disappointments which must end as they began."

Troven heard this lamentation with regret ; but what could he say to make a faded man cherish gayer hopes. He returned very sad in consequence to his own chambers, where, as he sat ruminating some time, the disconsolate words still ringing in his ears, he recollected that one of his publishers had apprised him that a tale or essay was expected from his pen. He had prepared himself with no theme : in the transaction which we have recorded, his attention was too much engaged to afford him leisure for his wonted studies ; but time pressed, and his ruminations were disturbed by the entrance of a sharp boy, bearing a note from his publisher, written on an uncomely piece of paper, reminding him that he could wait no longer. Troven, with his usual confidence in himself, requested the little messenger to call again in the morning as early as he pleased, and the paper

would be ready. The boy however said, that he was ordered to get it that night. "But you cannot," said Troven, "so go away and go to bed, that you may be the earlier here to take it from me in the morning." This was enough; the boy turned, and drawing the door behind him, thoughtlessly whistled as he descended the stair.

This incident, seemingly so trivial, had a deeper effect on our hero than we shall attempt to describe. He had just parted from Villiers, whose talents and sagacity seemed to grow greater as they were better known; and the circumstances with which he longed to be at rest, afforded such a contrast to the cheerfulness of the light-hearted boy, that they produced a current of thought at once pleasing and sorrowful. The bookseller's note was lying on the table, and to fulfil his promise, he drew his writing materials towards him, repeating as he placed them in order, a part of the exordium to the *Castle of Indolence*, as he prepared to write the story subjoined.

Oh, mortal man, that liveth here by toil,
Do not complain of this thy hard estate:
That like an emmet thou must ever moil,
Is a sore sentence of an ancient date,
And certes there is for it reason great.

THE DREAM.

AMIDST the mountains of the “north countrie”* is an extensive blue lake, on which, at noon, no shadow can be traced; the hills and uplands, by which it is surrounded, all present their brightest sides to its beautiful waters, and, for upwards of an hour, it then appears as a mirror on which the sun shines with peculiar lustre.

The streams, which rush into this crystalline basin, are clear, cool and picturesque; several, on account of their romantic features, are visited by young travellers, and persons accustomed to indulge in the reveries of imagination; but there is one sylvan rivulet more deserving of attention than them all, and which, from its quiet flow and sequestered course, is seldom noticed. From a remote rock leaps in it a south running spring, which, from that circumstance, is much frequented on Hallow-eve by the swains and maidens who dwell in the neighbourhood, repairing to its banks to perform their divinations.

* See Beattie's Minstrel.

The effusion from this natural fountain is mineral and tepid: it sends a slight aromatic fragrance, and possesses the power of producing sleep, in which the dreams are wonderfully consistent with themselves and delightful in their incidents; but it is thought to have some intoxicating quality, and, in consequence, is but seldom tasted.

One summer's day a shepherd boy, belonging to the adjacent hills, had strayed into the glen in which this forbidden water descends. He was, in many respects, a singular stripling, and had a strange pleasure in lone places, and where, in ancient times, poets would have seen nymphs and fauns pursuing their innocent gaieties. His father, a village schoolmaster, had given him the romantic name of Driades, and delighted in filling his fancy with recitals of courtly pageants and fantastical adventures. Thus, without endeavour on the boy's part, he was unlike the other lads of the village, and yet withal, more gentle, good, and simple, than any of the other boys that might have been his companions.

Driades, finding himself alone in the green hollow where the spring gushed odoriferously from the rock, sat himself down. He had never been there before, and the leaves of the birch and hazel shed into the sultry air their sweetest perfume. On all sides rocks and cliffs and feathery trees hung above him, and no sound molested the calm that breathed there but the falling waters and the occasional call of the merle to her mate. It was a warm and soft day, and all around were images of peace and rest. Confidence was vocal in the bowers, and the genius of the place whispered

tranquillity to the blameless and unguarded Driades.

Overpowered by his previous journey and the warmth of the day, he approached the enticing waters. He had never heard of their qualities, and, allured by their brightness, drank of them freely : surprised at tasting them tepid, and yet leaping from the rock, he renewed his draught to assure his palate that he was not mistaken. In doing this he discovered their faint and delicious odour, and tasted again and again, until he had inadvertently indulged in a more copious draught than those acquainted with the spring would have ventured to take.

In the course of a few minutes the intoxicating influence of the waters began to prevail, and he stretched himself upon the green sward and surrendered his senses to sleep. The day, the place, and the thoughtlessness of Driades were propitious to his slumber, and he continued, for several hours, in unmolested repose ; but late in the afternoon, near the time that the sun was setting, a stranger, who had taken up his abode for a short time on the banks of the lake, happened to explore the untrodden margin of the rill into which the medicinal water was flowing. Seeing the entranced youth lying in defenceless sleep in the sylvan dells, he went towards him and awakened him.

Driades, in rising from his couch, stretched out his arms, and, yawning with pleasure, reproached the stranger mildly for disturbing a dream, the pleasantest he had ever enjoyed.

Surprised by the look and expression of the boy, the stranger paused beside him, and enquired of

what his dream had consisted. After a short explanation they seated themselves together on the embroidered turf, and Driades thus related the story of the vision which had so charmed his slumber : —

“ I thought myself,” said Driades, “ in a grand and gorgeous metropolitan city ; all around me were lofty structures and solemn temples, pinnacles crowned with gold, vast colonnades, stairs and sculptured palaces, triumphal arches and surpassing domes. I beheld objects of wealth and dominion, and on every side I heard the buzz of a great multitude, and saw chariots and horsemen and nobles in all the pomp of honours, antiquity, and power. Presently, from a stupendous portico, heralds and trumpeters issued forth, and, with a flourish, announced the great king : all the crowd of spectators knelt at the sound, and in due time, I beheld, after a retinue of officers clothed with oriental splendour, the monarch, borne on a golden throne, into the midst of them. Of the ceremonies that were then performed, and the decrees he issued, I cannot speak ; but the plaudits which his wisdom received were loud and long, and he was hailed by the vast multitude that filled the spacious courts of the palace with demonstrations of praise and joy.

“ When this resplendent scene had lasted some time, the king retired into his interior halls ; his attendants followed, and the crowd dispersed. All went away, and I was left alone ; but at last I too moved from my situation, and began to examine more in detail the edificial grandeur of that Babylonian town : wherever I turned, my sight was per-

plexed with new wonders ; pleasure sparkled in every visage, and methought the New Jerusalem could present no superior splendour and happiness.

“ But I was alone : in all the tides of that multitude I saw no friend ; I heard no congratulations, I was sad, I knew not for what ; I wandered along, a lonely and destitute boy.

“ For a time my disconsolate feelings were painfully awake ; I desired to participate in the revels that rung around me, and I longed to share the feats and renown of those that the king delighted to honour.

“ While I was standing in this state, a venerable old man addressed me ; his locks were of a snowy whiteness bound with a golden fillet, and his loose dark brown robes, though in colour and form betokening simplicity and riches, showed that he was no common man.

“ He enquired from what part of the mountains I had arrived — what I knew, and my objects in visiting the metropolis.

“ I replied to his questions with humility and candour. I told how my youth had been spent, and how I had strayed into that wonderful city, nor did I conceal from him my friendlessness and the fears which weighed upon my heart.

“ Pleased with my replies and interested in my forlorn situation, he invited me to follow him to his house, and promised me a refuge among his servants.

“ I obeyed this benevolent old man, and followed him to his dwelling. It was a noble building, constructed of the richest materials and in a manner

that showed the taste and the opulence of the possessor. At the magnificent portal he committed me to the care of his steward, a person whose appearance was calculated to ensure esteem, and I was soon after enrolled among the number of his household.

“Delighted to have found, so early, a patron so estimable, I strove to attract in my servitude, the notice of the steward, nor was I in this ineffectual. He saw my industry, he praised my intelligence, and my heart beat with happiness without pride.

“In the course of a short time after this fortunate overture, one of the principal servants of the establishment happened to die, and the steward, notwithstanding my youth, spoke to his venerable master in my behalf, and recommended me as a fit person to be the successor of the dead. I was accordingly promoted, and the increase of the cares of my trust made me more ardent in my desire to give satisfaction. Every thing prospered with me; the steward exulted in having recommended me, our master was content with my efforts, and I was untired myself in my solicitude to merit attention.

“I had not been long in the enjoyment of this felicity when another vacancy occurred in the household by the death of a clerk who was employed in the land office of our master. It had been observed that, during the intervals of my particular vocation, I had engaged myself in arithmetical studies, which the good-natured steward had observed, and had told his master that I belonged to another class than the menial order to which I was consigned. The old man acknow-

ledged that he had himself noticed me, and said, if the steward deemed me fit for the clerkship, he had his full consent to remove me into the office.

“ This was an era in my existence : I was raised from servility to an honourable station, in which there was no limit to the elevation I might obtain ; instead, therefore, of giving my leisure, like the other young men, to revelry and ease, I redoubled my industry. Every moment was precious, and every hour, when I might have been idle, was spent in the attainment of some new accomplishment. The steward deemed his duty well performed in facilitating my rise, and our master was pleased often to converse with me, and to show the preference which my assiduity had inspired. Thus, step by step, I was promoted in that household, and, perhaps, might have reached to great eminence ; but it was thought my merits were so superior that my services should be devoted to the king : accordingly, one day our excellent master spoke to me on the subject, and enquired how I would like the service of the state. So great an honour I had never dreamt of ; but I replied that, in whatever situation it should please heaven to place me, I would endeavour to do my duty, as the best means in my possession, to prove my gratitude to my friends.

“ The old man was pleased with my answer, and procured me, in the course of the same day, employment with the ministers of the crown.

“ In a few years my success surprised myself. I was not only promoted by the routine of accidents, but chosen for merit ; and I rose in time to fill an office of important trust.

“ In this situation, honoured by the king and esteemed by his subjects, I gathered wealth and found myself in the ranks of those who wear the decorations of renown.

“ At this juncture a great calamity overtook my old master, — a fearful inundation ravaged his lands, his cattle perished in the deluge, and his vines, fig-trees and olives, were swept away. In the midst of this desolation I beheld the misery to which he was reduced ; my heart yearned with the remembrance of his kindness, and I mourned to think that one, who had been accustomed to such opulence, should, in his old age, be so exposed to the stings of poverty. I called also to mind, with a softer sentiment, that he had an only child — a daughter who must share his distress ; and the fortune I had made by this time was sufficient to mitigate the pangs of their unmerited loss.

“ I went to him, and said that all I possessed he was welcome to, and, to prove the sincerity of my offer, I proposed to wed his daughter. He made no answer, but went into the apartment where she was sitting, and repeated what I had said ; tears rushed into her eyes, and she came at once to me with outstretched hands, and became my wife.

“ In the course of time the old man died, and she was the inheritrix of all his vast domains, which more propitious seasons began to renovate. With her I had many children, our daughters, good and fair, were selected for wives by the primates of the land ; and our seven sons maintained the character which their father had earned with the public. All around was green and fertile ; ho-

nours were at my acceptance ; abundance poured her horn at my feet ; and —— But you awoke me at this moment.”

“ Ah !” said the stranger, “ yours, Driades, has been a common dream : youth is beguiled by many such fancies ; after a long life, such as you have described, he awakes to his real condition, and finds that all which he deemed so bright and fair was but a vision.”



THE STOLEN CHILD.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

TROVEN, as he said, experienced in his life no very striking adventures, and yet to most men it would have been extraordinary. It is, however, we apprehend, a common thing with those who pass through surprising accidents greatly to under-rate them.

After the death of Mr. Pearl, who intended to act towards him so kindly, he felt his means quickly circumscribed, nor was it long until they were entirely dried up; for although his energies were none impaired, and his knowledge fresh and unexhausted, his booksellers began to let him understand that he had written or wrote too much. For some time this intelligence depressed the elasticity of his spirit; it even weighed upon the efforts of his genius, and sorrow produced the same effect as if he was, like Samson, shorn of his locks and subjected to derision.

His friend Villiers was out of town when this

happened, and no other in whom he had equal confidence was near — indeed, in no other had he equal confidence — and he was not expected to return for some time.

It would not be easy to describe what Troven experienced. His money was expended ; his best friend and patron long dead ; himself involved in an expensive lawsuit, of which the issue was doubtful ; his literary labours no longer a resource on which he could rely, and all his circumstances were full of trouble, darkened with dismay, and far beyond the reach of any hope that he could throw out. Like the mariner whose bark has been driven upon a lea and rocky shore, he saw before him but inevitable destruction. To remain as he was ensured an equal fate ; to attempt a landing was to plunge into desperation, and the cliffs over which the salt sea-spray was tremendously dashing, no boat, nor raft, nor spar, nor plank, could reach in safety, or if reached, the impetuous waves rolled with a rage that nothing could withstand, and in which every thing must perish.

On the evening of that day he was sitting alone in his chambers, meditating in his utmost need on whom of all he knew he could apply to for assistance ; but there was not one.

His last candle was burned to the socket ; he had not means enough to renew the light ; his fire was low and lugubrious ; the flame that cheered the hearth had departed, and the embers, red and lurid, were smouldering away into cold and darkness ; slight shadows waned on the walls of the room, but his bosom was more dismal.

As he was leaning forward with his feet on the

fender, ruminating on his forlorn condition and his cheerless prospects, a soft tapping was heard at the door, and he rose from his inclined posture to enquire who was the stranger. Much to his surprise, his old friend, Mrs. Servit, was there, who knew his voice in the dark, and loudly expressed her joy at finding him at home.

She came forward unbidden, and seating herself in a chair near the half-extinguished fire, without hearing what he had to say, began to tell him of the disappointment she had suffered in Scotland, when she returned to her native place.

“ Oh,” said she, “ Mr. Edward, alteration has been busy yonder ; none are now alive that I cared for, and all the living are strangers to me. I tholed with them as long as I could, but, alas ! yon is not the land that I left. The summers have less heat, and the winters are colder ; they have no more the bright and jocund days that I knew in auld lang syne. So I have come to spend the lees of life where I am better known, and before doing so I could not but first and foremost see you ; but this is a coldrife fire ; get me a candle, and let us have a comfortable cup of tea, and I’ll tell you all about it.”

To repair the fire was beyond our hero’s means ; to procure a candle was equally impossible ; and his tea was no more. At first he began to tell her, grateful and amazed that so kind a friend should have been sent to him at that extremity ; but his tongue faltered, and he suddenly burst into a laugh so wild, so loud, so, in its rattle, unearthly, that in alarm Mrs. Servit started from her seat, and exclaimed —

“ In the name of all that’s good, is he a bed-lamite ?”

And overtaken by the flood of her heart, she wept, unable to restrain her grief, — sorrowful she knew not wherefore.

This led to an unavoidable pause, which enabled her to control her sudden affliction, and Troven to recover the mastery of himself; when he frankly told her she had come to him in the very crisis when fortune had fled. In a word, he confessed his friendless and pennyless condition.

“ Be thankful,” replied she, “ that for this night you have a roof to shelter you, and that I have been sent to quench your present suffering. It often flitted across my brain, after I heard of Ezra Pearl’s knavery, that ye might be in scant and want, while I had a good income to share with you. That was the cause of my coming the night here. Had I found you blithe and bien I would have said nothing; but to find you reduced to the selvage, is in its way a special blessing, and from this hour we shall never part, till I have seen you round the corner of your difficulties, and flourishing on the other side, like

‘ A green bay tree,
Near planted by a river,
Which in the season yieldeth fruit,
And its leaf fadeth never.’ ”

When the good lady had made an end, her domestic indefatigability returned, and she lost no time in supplying the desiderata so much wanted.

“ Now, Mr. Edward,” she added, “ you must allow me to take an authority in your house. Oh, well-a-day! little did them that’s away think of

the blackness of this hour — you must not be molested with my freedom — heigh ho ! — When I first took you in my arms, ye were a wee, wee baby ; but he who brought you up as his own is now away, and what he thought would make a man of you, is swallowed up in that nook, at the mouth of a place that I will not name, called the Court of Chancery.”

By this time the laundress had come to receive her mandates for the evening and the morning, which Mrs. Servit took it upon her to give, telling her to be sure and have a pot of cream for breakfast, for she understood, unless she gave a particular order, she was credibly informed, that the Londoners would serve them with chalk and water. She then sat down while the laundress got the tea-things ready, and said, that she would stay for that night at the White Horse in Fetterlane, adding, “ And Mr. Edward, you will not be surprised to hear that I have taken a lodging in London, and from this town move will I not, till I have seen an end of your dolorosity.”

“ In truth,” said he, remembering her kindness of old, with a glowing and affectionate heart, and something also of her bustling character, “ I have too long experienced your motherliness to offer any objection to your will ; do as you please, and you will give me only pleasure ; but I should have thought that a country life was but an ill preparation for a residence in town.”

“ You may say so,” said she ; “ but all the world is alike to me, after the disappointment that I have suffered by going back to Scotland. There I found every thing changed. The very house of

God was pulled down that I well mind I used to go to with my granny, and a new big and gawky edifice built in its place. No, Mr. Edward, I have seen enough to keep me in London." And in saying these words her heart filled full, and she exclaimed with tears in her eyes, "I am, in a sense, almost as friendless as yourself."

Very little more passed with our hero: he had found himself on the edge of a precipice, and still trembled when he thought of the danger from which he had been so unexpectedly rescued, by one to whom of all living he was most attached.

His immediate wants were relieved, but he expressed his apprehensions that he would be a burthen where he had hoped soon to be a friend. Mrs. Servit was, however, peremptory: she would not permit him to think so; on the contrary, with the feeling and spirit of true kindness, she enlarged on the obligations he had laid her under for the annuity she had inherited from Mr. Pearl; and with characteristic warmth said, with a sentiment of visible pleasure, that she would do with her own as she liked.



CHAPTER II.

TRIVIAL as the event may seem to many readers, the arrival of Mrs. Servit in London at the juncture mentioned, was important. Our hero stood on the edge and extremity of his circumstances ; his resources had all run dry, and he could perceive nothing but immediate ruin. In a very short time it would have been necessary, for mere existence, to have submitted to the mortification of pledging his clothes and valuables, and, when these were gone, he had no friend to whom he could apply. .

That his thoughts in consequence were gloomy, need not be described ; but it would be doing his fortitude injustice to say that he felt them with more dismay than became a man who had confidence in his fortune, or, that he estimated below its worth, the incident of finding such a friend in such an extremity as he had reason to believe Mrs. Servit to be. His situation, indeed, deserved sympathy, for he had not before him any chance of recovering from the mendicant situation with which he was threatened ; and, perhaps, there is not in all the calamities of life, a more affecting spectacle than

that of a young man who sees himself exposed to sink in the world, when life, ability, and hope, warrant him to cherish more lofty expectations.

But the arrival of Mrs. Servit, dictated by affection, had its full influence in dissipating his fears; there was, it is true, nothing in the event which greatly changed his lot, for, however kind her intentions, her income was small, and she had it not in her power very essentially to serve him; still her residence at hand cheered his situation, and prevented him from suffering that desolate feeling which had begun to intrude, like the dry-rot, into the very core of his heart.

Not more than half his terms were at this time ate through, and he beheld before him a long dreary vista of difficulties between him and those sunny fields, where a conscious strength of talent flattered him with the dream of distinction. The utmost economy was resolved upon, not as a matter of choice but of necessity, for he saw that by attending to it he must forego the acquaintanceship he had formed with various characters whom he thought likely to promote his professional views.

But an event at this time occurred in the general world, which tended to soften the asperities with which he was surrounded.

Public taste, which had hitherto preferred essays of research and learning, took a sudden turn; works of imagination and general disquisition succeeded in popularity graver topics. This change was advantageous to Troven; it suited better his talent and the bent of his mind, but his natural pride prevented him from reaping all the benefits to which it was contributory. He had, from an in-

nate sensibility, a dislike to making bargains for himself, and the different publishers by whom he was engaged to write, had shrewdness enough to see this weakness and to make their own terms. Thus, while the world revelled on the fruits of his genius, and the publishers exulted in their profits, he derived comparatively but little advantage from his productions; that little to his rigid system of saving, was of great importance. It enabled him to retain his caste with society, and to appear unblemished in his garments: the last sign that betrays the mutation of an altered fortune.

In this corrosive predicament he occasionally met with adventures; some of them were light and gay, and furnished him with many a cheerful hour that would have passed darkly; others were of a different kind, and drew largely on his compassion for those who are made to suffer the ails that flesh is heir to; but none led him to so curious a view of human nature as a species of profitable employment in which he was sometimes engaged.

Men of rank and fortune find themselves sometimes constrained by fate to publish pamphlets; but, unfortunately, fate, which gives the impulse, gives not with it ability sufficient to make the book deserving attention. The booksellers see this, but an intercourse with literary characters teaches a distinct lesson, and in cases such as we allude to, authors come often to request the advice of such men as our hero. For their assistance the parties in general pay well, particularly for compiling books of travels. Many are those who carry a high and flourishing head with their names on the title-pages of volumes, who have had no more

to say in their fabrication than they have to the workmanship of their own clothes. It is true that some to whom their calibre is known, express themselves surprised that they were capable of putting things together so well; but, innocent souls! they know not the devices of vanity, nor the tricks that Satan or the world plays with rich incapables.

Although this sort of trade often moved the spleen and indignation of Troven, even while he was obliged to have recourse to it to eke out his narrow livelihood, it led him into interesting adventures; for it was known to the publishers that he was available to this sort of business, and they, in consequence, consulted him respecting the merits of books offered by unknown authors.

On one occasion they sent a lady with a volume which they thought above par; but the fair author wanted an immediate payment for the manuscript, and that mode of doing business did not suit them. The work, however, appeared to have merit, and if he, upon looking it over carefully, would recommend them to give a small sum for the manuscript, perhaps they would deal with her.

Mrs. Halden, as we shall call her, to conceal a meritorious woman from the prying inquisition of the world, brought this letter with the manuscript to him one morning while he was yet at breakfast.

Her appearance bespoke a widow; she was about the middle of life, and her husband had been an officer. Something in her air and manner announced that her best days had gone by, yet

still she was fashionably dressed, though her clothes were faded from their propriety. Her appearance, while Troven read the note, was impressive, and her silence and attitude indicated how much store she set by the manuscript. He could not possibly mistake these signs of an early and favourable decision being important. He, therefore, requested her to call the day after the next, when he would have formed some opinion of the book, and regretted that he could not give her an earlier answer.

With unchanging good breeding she rose and bade him good morning; but, in turning round to the door of his chamber, he accidentally perceived that, beneath her garments, she was literally clothed in rags. He took no notice of this, however, but added, as on second thoughts, that if she would call next day he would try if it was possible then to give her an answer. The poor woman, unable to speak, turned round, and looked at him for a moment, and, giving a deep sigh, hastily withdrew.

An incident of this kind could not but make a deep impression. As soon as his chambers were put in order he began to read the book, equally surprised at the pathos and elegance with which it was written: no work of greater taste had been ever before submitted to him, and he read on with delight and satisfaction. As he read, he frequently said to himself, that it was just such a work as the lady he had seen was likely to have produced; altogether, the book and the author were in strange unison. Pleased to have discerned this resem-

blance, and also that her production was superior to most things of the kind, he continued to read unremittingly, and, by dinner time, had carefully perused all the manuscript.

With a knowledge of the contents, however, the interest excited did not end ; the rags and the raiment, and the sigh and the look of Mrs. Halden, dwelt on his recollection, and bespoke a wish that his opinion might prove useful, nor could he get rid of the impression which her appearance had made.

He conjectured she was a mother, and the accidental sight of her rags convinced him she was in great poverty. Her manners, however, indicated that she had been bred a gentlewoman, and had been habituated to the etiquettes of polished life ; still the sigh rung in his heart, and he wished that he had said at once he would immediately read what she had written, that she might without delay make a bargain with the bookseller.

In this frame of mind he sat down and wrote an answer, that no time might be lost next morning when she again called, but still he was haunted by her sorrowful image and the air of distress which she evidently wore.

When he had finished his letter he went to dinner, but in every thing he saw her image ; it was not, however, that omnipresent thing which lovers see, but something more akin to a vision. He was greatly molested and also displeased with himself that he had exchanged so few words with one so accomplished and in such distress ; for he could not conceal from himself that she

was in profound affliction ; perhaps his bounty, little as it might be, would have mitigated her suffering but he had forgot to ask for her address and he knew not where to seek for her that night, or to direct the generous Mrs. Servit to seek out her abode to alleviate such misery.

It is thus that the warm hearted ever experience the pangs of guiltless remorse, as if they had been accessaries to those distresses which in their inattention they neglect to allay.

CHAPTER III.



THE following day when Mrs. Halden called, Troven, who was anxiously expecting her, had the manuscript and his letter for the booksellers made up. He recommended, in strong terms, her production, as possessed of great merit, and one that they should not allow to slip through their fingers for a trifle. He would have been more particular, but the author and the work had enlisted his feelings, and he was afraid of saying more than he could justify if the verdict of the public were unfavourable afterwards.

He was sitting idle, expecting her, and reflecting on her concealed distress and singular talents: wondering to himself how it happened that female writers seldom possessed humour to any great degree, while many of them excelled in pathos and delicacy; — but she interrupted his meditations.

On her entrance he lifted the book and letter, which he almost immediately put into her hands, complimenting her, at the same time, on the taste and genius which her work exhibited.

“Then you think,” replied she, “that it will be accepted?”

“It should,” said Troven; “my opinion is very favourable: and,” he added, with an inflection of voice, looking, at the same time, very earnestly at her, “I have strongly recommended it.”

Her complexion, as he said this, changed colour quickly, and she appeared greatly agitated, exclaiming, in a very touching manner, “God bless you! the fatherless will pray for you.”

The tone and energy with which this burst of feeling was uttered, convinced him, if he had any doubt, that the price of the manuscript would be to her of eminent importance, — but for some time he did not presume to enquire. Her emotion, however, necessarily obliged him to take some notice of her empassioned sorrow, for she presently added, “It is all I have:” and the tears which she had hitherto repressed, flowed fast as she spoke.

“Alas! madam,” said he, “literature is but a precarious resource; and, unless an author has some other standby, success in it is often but a Will o’ the Wisp that leads to poverty.”

“I have no standby,” exclaimed Mrs. Halden, “but I had hoped, while I could write, our situation was not desperate.”

“Then you have a family,” said Troven, pensively.

“I have that misfortune, if I may dare to say so: alas! they are too young to be of any use to themselves, and the sense was not given with them to their penniless mother to behold their craving with impunity, what would become of them were

I dead. If for this I obtain a few pounds, it will enable us to continue our journey to my father's."

"By that expression," said our hero, "the old gentleman then is still alive."

She made no answer, but appeared very sorrowful, saying—

"Yes, sir, and he is at once my only comfort and the cause of my grief: he is a clergyman, the son of another from whom he inherited no fortune. His living is respectable in the north; but he has had a large family, and his income was too little to bring his children up as we were educated. Without portion I married a young officer, with his consent, who had as little, but the remote prospect of succeeding to a considerable inheritance. I went with my husband abroad to a colony where his regiment was stationed. He died, and I have returned home with two children. We are in great want, and have been landed in London, where we have no friend, and are without the means of reaching my poor father's. The hope of raising the means by this is all my confidence in this world; unless I sell it to day, God only knows what will become of us."

Troven was much disturbed by her recital: it was given without the slightest endeavour to interest him, and seemed in affecting unison with the simplicity that pervaded her volume. He found that he could not carry his questions further, and her tact enabled her to discern that she should no longer stay; but a momentary pause enabled him to request that, when she had seen the booksellers, to come and let him know. At the same time he thought of Mrs. Servit's kind-heartedness, and re-

joiced that, although he could not help the sad widow to overcome her difficulties, perhaps he might soften to her the edge of grief.

Almost immediately after Mrs. Halden went away, promising to return when she had completed her business, and he resumed his daily studies.

She had not left him long when she returned and told him how greatly she was obliged to him, for that the publishers had, on his recommendation, taken the manuscript and paid her liberally ; but, upon enquiry, he found that their completion of the bargain was only to a moiety of what he had supposed : she was however happy and content, for necessity made her receive a little as a great deal.

He then gave the address of Mrs. Servit, requesting her to call at once upon her, assuring her that she would find one who would partake of her sufferings.

Shortly after this brief interview, the disconsolate lady retired, and he prepared himself to visit Mrs. Servit, to acquaint her with something of Mrs. Halden's story ; but he could not help reflecting, as he dressed himself, that her case was more distressing than his had been in the crisis of his fortune, and relieved almost as unexpectedly.

Thoughts of this kind were to him beneficial, and served as a species of education which generally can only be acquired in society, making his fortitude firmer, without impairing his sensibility. But he was soon destined to experience an inconceivable grief. On his arrival at Mrs. Servit's lodgings he told her Mrs. Halden's story ; spoke in the highest terms of her talents, and expressed his conviction of her virtues and truth.

While he was speaking, she came in considerably before the time she was expected, and her appearance betokened the wildness of a grief that had pierced her heart.

A short conversation ensued, the result of which was inexpressibly painful. Mrs. Halden, soon after leaving his chambers, she had no imagination where, had her pocket cut away. The money received from the publishers was gone, and she was in a worse condition than before, as the manuscript was sold.

It happened that, in relating her misfortune, despair took the accent and look of levity, and she spoke of what had befallen her with a degree of wildness which terrified our hero, but which had a very opposite effect on Mrs. Servit, who was led to conclude that Mrs. Halden was no other, as she said, than a trooper of London, and was loth to afford her any assistance ; nor was she very diffident in expressing this opinion. The widow looked on vacancy as she spoke, and our hero sat in silent consternation. There was something about the poor woman that assured him she had told only the truth ; and the purity and excellence of her work were additional evidence that she practised no deception. The prejudices, however, of Mrs. Servit, were all awake and up in arms ; her language was barely civil, and her manners certainly rude ; but Mrs. Halden bore all her inuendos with a sad composure, or rather her mind was so engrossed with her calamity, that she heard not a word of all Mrs. Servit was saying.

When some time had elapsed, the landlady came into the room : she had been in the city,

and, in coming along, had encountered a mob at Newgate, conveying, as she said, a street thief to the prison, on whom, in searching his person on account of a recent enterprise, a sum of money had been found, of which he could give no satisfactory account. The notes were new, evidently, by their appearance, had not been long in circulation ; and it should have been in his power to have said from whom they were received, but he could not.

The landlady could give no more particular account of the matter ; but Mrs. Halden wildly declared they were hers. Mrs. Servit was shaken by her earnestness in her notion ; and our hero, while the women were talking, lifted his hat and went straight to the prison to ascertain the numbers of the notes, and such other details as might elucidate a transaction which was, in its nature and discovery, so singular and affecting.

CHAPTER IV.

By this time the evening was merging into night; the lamps were lighted, the shop-windows beamed in every direction like new-born stars, and the orbs of heaven began to glitter with their wonted lustre, the streets were less crowded, many had retired from them to their lodgings: the music of the organist and street-minstrel rose above the murmurs of the multitude; and the drays disencumbered of their loads were hastening homeward. It was that hour in which labour resigns his toil, and guilt rouses himself for enterprise.

But our hero, unaffected by these signs, hastened on towards the prison, his mind was engrossed with the distress of Mrs. Halden, and grieved that circumstances were so much against her as, in the opinion of Mrs. Servit, entitled her to no commiseration. He was not himself in the slightest degree disturbed in the opinion he had formed; but he knew that, with all her goodness of heart, Mrs. Servit was full of prejudice, and had taken up an ill opinion of the unhappy woman.

When he arrived at Newgate, some little time

elapsed before he could obtain admission. It was near the hour when the prison gates are shut for the night to visitors; but as he enquired for the numbers of the notes which had been found upon the young man, he was at last admitted.

During the time he stood at the door explaining the object and nature of his visit to the man stationed there, a woman also sought entrance; she was very meanly and dirtily dressed; her tall gaunt figure was wrapped in a cloak that possibly once had been red; she wore a tattered straw hat, and two wretched bundlings of rags instead of shoes; yet she had earrings, and was altogether a deplorable picture of one declined from opulence to squalid beggary.

The man at the door at last consented to admit Troven, and at the same time this outcast woman, with whom he seemed to have some acquaintance. At an inner door stood another man, and with him an old grey headed inmate of the prison, who led Troven to a room where he said the culprit, whom he sought, was giving some account of himself to a lawyer. Troven followed without speaking, shuddering with dismay as he heard around the shutting of heavy doors, with mirthless laughter and the clank of fetters.

After giving a small gratuity to his guide, he went in and was followed by the woman, who, however, kept a little behind him, as if she avoided the eyes of the lawyer.

The back of the culprit, who stood at the end of a table, was towards our hero, in whom Troven beheld with surprise, an exceedingly well-dressed young man; nothing in his appearance bespoke his igno-

minious profession, but his language was low and mean, such as the vulgar make use of. In all other respects his phisiognomy was mild, his manners good, and his whole deportment not unbecoming his dress.

In the meantime the woman had also been looking at the young man, and, suddenly, forgetful of the place, she gave a loud scream, and declared herself his mother.

The lateness of the hour rendered this interruption of the proceedings so far important that the lawyer shut his book, postponing all further enquiries till next morning; and, without observing our hero in the room, went away. By this opportunity Troven was left with the mother and son and two others, who were spectators as well as himself.

A scene of recrimination between the mother and son then ensued; she blamed him for his clumsiness in the work he had undertaken, in coarse unsparing language, and he retaliated by accusing her of bringing him up in a life of hazards to which his heart never lay.

There was something so frightful in their altercation, that the feelings of our hero, had he obeyed them, would have prompted him to quit the apartment, but he was fascinated to the spot by the dread and novelty of their situation, and he forgot to inquire about Mrs. Halden's notes. Indeed there was something in the bickering of the woman that more nearly interested himself; she spoke of the trouble which her son had given her from his youth, and particularly of the obstinacy he had shown in childhood, when she had stripped the son of some gentlefolks to supply him with new clothes.

Troven, on looking at the blighted youth before

him, saw that he appeared nearly of his own age ; and he had heard from Mrs. Servit, by whom his rags were preserved, all the circumstances in which he had himself been found, but at this moment it was announced that the hour had expired when visitors must quit the prison, and he was constrained, before he thought of the notes, to retire with the woman and the rest of the party to the door.

When they had reached the outside of the jail it was quite dark, but he saw by the lights which gleamed in the street, the abandoned woman walking before him.

He would have shrunk from her company, but something like a spell was upon him, and he could not. At last he addressed her ; expressing his surprise that she should have brought up her son in such a way of life and being so vexed at his jeopardy.

“ What could I else ? ” said she, “ was not I, his mother, an outcast — a convict, that had beaten hemp a hundred times till her hands were blistered ? Was such a woman in a condition to teach her son to be an honest man ? No, no, Sir ; you are a green-horn, I could only make him a thief ; but he ought by this time to have been more clever at the trade, for his ’prenticeship began before he was three years old.”

Troven little heeded her frantic words ; they induced him however to question her as they went along, what she meant by accusing the young man of that reluctance to receive the new clothes of which she had stripped another child.

“ Ah ! ” cried she “ it is an old story, but if you will treat me to a quartern of gin I’ll tell you it

all, for it is now too long in the devil's belly to be cast up against me."

Troven, however, declined her proposition ; but he gave her some money, and said, that if she would walk with him towards Pentonville, and tell him the story, he would give her more.

This proposition was too good to be resisted, and they walked on together, when resuming her troubled and guilty tale, she related to him, with something like an air of triumph, in what manner she had seized a little boy while he was riding on a stick, and carried him off from Southampton-row, to where she lodged, in a beggarly den, and afterwards stripped him of his clothes for her reprobate son as she called him.

Our hero, almost unable to suppress the agitation into which he was thrown by this recital, and which the darkness of the night concealed, eagerly bade her make haste. But the courteous reader must supply his amazement, when she continued —

" Scarcely had I niffered the rags for the fine clothes, when I was seized with a terrible fright. The child cried ; I thought of what had been done, and being fresh at the business, I left my own son alone in our lodgings, and bore like a desperate fugitive the urchin I had plundered, to a long distance from London, without halting. Towards evening we were not far from a village by the side of a common in ——shire ; there wearied and tired of my occasional burthen, I sat down. It appeared to me, then, that my greatest danger arose from the brat being in my possession ; and the devil tempted me ; but I was not all good ; for though God kept my hands clean of blood, I left the boy

upon the common, and made the best of my way by another route to town."

Troven was inexplicably affected by this story. It seemed so like what he had himself suffered, and answered in so many essential points to his own case, that he could not but believe he was himself no other than the victim of her criminal purpose ; but he said nothing, except enquiring if she had never heard the fate of the child she had so trepanned : her answer was short.

"Never," said she ; "but somehow his doom lies heavy on my conscience, and I have never forgotten him ; I see him yet, when in the intervals of crying he piteously implored me to take him home."

Troven having in this accidental way obtained a clue, as he believed, to his parentage, he requested her address, and told her where his chambers were, bidding her call in the morning.

CHAPTER V.

By the time that Troven reached the lodgings of Mrs. Servit, her antipathies to Mrs. Halden were greatly appeased; like in the fable of the lion in love with a country lass, her kindness had drawn the fangs and talons of prejudice, but for consistency she still pretended to have doubts on the subject. The despondent lady had, in the absence of our hero, made her acquainted with the principal incidents of her story, and had won her kindness by her unaffected relation. They had taken tea together, and were sitting in expectation of his return. The first words on his entering the room, even before he had time to address them, were an eager exclamation from Mrs. Halden, if her orphan's money had been found.

Events, as we have already mentioned, of nearer concernment, had made him think of its importance as a secondary thing; perhaps he suffered at the time, something of his hereditary absence of mind, for he looked startled and aghast at her question and his reply was not satisfactory, but he added, that the examination of the culprit for his

justification was incomplete, it would however be finished next morning.

"Alas!" said the unhappy lady, "is it not yet ascertained whether all my poor babies have lost may yet be recovered?"

Troven, not knowing what exactly to say, turned to Mrs. Servit and enquired if she recollected the day on which he was found on the common by Dr. Wycombe; for whenever he could speak of that event before strangers he never failed to do so, in the hope by that freedom he might be led into the path of discovering his family.

The answer was more to the point than he expected; she declared that at the moment she did not recollect, but she had written it in her Bible, were it still might be seen.

Mrs. Halden, wholly engrossed with her own situation, cried with some impatience, "I beseech you inform me if there be any hope of recovery."

"Nothing will be wanting," cried Mrs. Servit, mistaking the drift of her interrogation, "on my part to make the right plain if it were to come to an issue, which I hope it is every day drawing nearer; the day and date are written by my own hand on the cover of the Word of God, and the rags are in a sealed-paper parcel at the bottom of my trunk."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Halden, with a wild accent, "is there nothing between my children and starvation."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Servit, "were the notes all the money you had?"

Mrs. Halden by this time, could only sob out "Yes, yes, we have but the goodness of Providence between us and want; and sad experience has

taught me that our trust may be fallacious, for It suits Its great plan of blessings to afflict with manifold misfortunes; and she added, starting from her seat, to cast down the worthy and overwhelm the innocent."

Mrs. Servit, who in all her life had never seen such an impassioned spectacle of grief, rose also from her seat, in sympathy and silence, wringing her hands and looking with flowing eyes on the afflicted mother.

Troven was pierced to the heart; his means afforded him no paliative for her distress; and he felt for the first time that anguish which is ashamed of sorrow; but Mrs. Servit soon recovered from her weeping astonishment, and with the presence of mind which never deserts the benevolent in the hour of need, took Mrs. Halden by the hand, and replacing her on the chair, said, "Out of this house you shall not go this night, without carrying comfort to your family; and come to me with your weans in the morning and you may be sure that I will not in the meantime forget to think of the misfortune that has befallen you."

Over what ensued we must draw a veil, and only add, when Mrs. Halden's tears were in some degree assuaged, she went away, and our hero tarried behind to communicate to Mrs. Servit the particulars of the extraordinary conversation he had held with the mother of the thief. He spoke of it sedately as a man speaks of imminent business in which all he is possessed of is at stake, and with but a feeble hope that the result may be different from his fears.

Mrs. Servit was one of those characters on whom

visible objects make a deep impression. The manner and attitude of despair, with which the hopeless widow uttered her exclamation, continued to fill the retina of her mind. She could not even think of what Troven related of his own case, much as undoubtedly she was attached to him; indeed for some time she could only give vent to the vague vapour of her feelings, while he could scarcely acquit himself of negligence in a mission which he had undertaken voluntarily, prompted solely by a wish to lessen the pressure of distress.

By-and-bye, however, they both became somewhat more calm and collected. Mrs. Servit was then all sympathy for Mrs. Halden; her prejudices were gone—which had risen without the slightest reason, except indeed that Troven in introducing her had spoken of her as a poetess, to secure a larger share of Mrs. Servit's good nature, but which had made her regard her as a damaged character. She saw, now, she was quite the reverse, and beheld in her only an unfortunate woman, on whom the hand of adversity had pressed with terrible effect; and her wishes far outran the means to which her generosity was ardently prompted.

When she had exhausted the terms of her vocabulary in condolence for the calamities which Mrs. Halden had met with, and told our hero that in introducing her as a poetess, she thought he meant to put her on her guard against a play-actress, or some other such like cattle, she suddenly, without any connecting expression, turned on him concerning his own case, and again required him to go over, with question and answer, his conversa-

tion with the woman in the red cloak, inquiring, when he had done, if he did not ask her name.

"I am not sure," said he, smitten with a consciousness of being quite overwhelmed with the knowledge he had acquired, "if I did ask her, but the name of her son was Jasper Tomlins."

"That's a very romantic name," cried Mrs. Servit. "Gracious me! I knew a servant that was called Jasper Tomlins in the household of the nephew of the old lady that I was companion to before I undertook to keep Mr. Pearl's house: what became of him I cannot tell, but he was a ramplor ne'er-do-well, and no far short of the hue of a blackguard. Jasper Tomlins—it could not be him, for it is more than five-and-twenty years since I knew him, and he was then a tempestuous kenquawhat, and the good was not in him."

"But," said our hero, "it might be his son."

"Aye, that's very true, I never thought of that; for his fine name was a clear proof that he was not come of an honest parentage; and it was a clishme-claver among the other servants that he was surely a gentleman's get, for he was found when an infant, in gay apparel, lying at a dyke side, with a cabbage-blade on his mouth to keep away the flies."

"He was a foundling," said Troven with a sigh.

"Oh, my tongue," cried Mrs. Servit, "you know of the old, is apt to run away with the sense. I did not mean a right sort of a foundling clothed in rags, with other certainties of his being born in a mysterious manner, like one of high degree, but just a laddy bairn, laid forlorn at a dyke-side, like

Moses in the bulrushes: but I am to blame to liken the likes of him to Moses, who had a king's daughter for his step-mother, and smote the house of Pharaoh with ten plagues, and afterwards drowned every skin of them in the Red Sea; Goodness me! what would this world have been had they got to the other side in safety?"

Troven was too much accustomed to her manner, to take amiss any *lapsus linguæ* that fell from her garrulity in the course of conversation, and he was always amused at her shifts to get out of a scrape. On this occasion he remarked that he had never before thought of Moses having been a foundling.

"If you did not, you ought," replied the lady; "for before you were sent to Dr. Wycombe's school, I mind very well teaching you all about him on the Sunday evenings. And, Mr. Edward, I would not undertake to say that you were then a prime scholar: ye had no a right reverence for the snuffers, the golden candlesticks and shovels of Israelitish worship in the wilderness."

"Oh, you know," cried Troven, in the same key, "what was meant by those things."

"Were they not ordained?" cried Mrs. Servit, glad to escape from her inadvertency about the foundling; "and is it not in a sense rank blasphemy to doubt of their ordination; but Mr. Edward, ye are no so orthodox as I could wish, and therefore I will never dispute the point with you; but who ever heard of tongs and shovels, and candlesticks, made of gold, ay, of fine gold too, that were kitchen furniture?"

In such loose talk as the foregoing, Mrs. Servit

very inartificially endeavoured to change the conversation ; but the incidents of the evening made it as absurd as it was disagreeable to our hero ; his own case furnished sufficient for him to think about, even without the painful reflections that arose when he thought of Mrs. Halden ; and he was exasperated when he called to mind in what manner both for her and himself he had so inconclusively acted. We have no excuse to make for him, but the robbery of Mrs. Halden had greatly disturbed him, and the extraordinary incidents which had succeeded, troubled his self-possession. Finding the omission could not be recalled, and that the ideas of Mrs. Servit were completely scattered abroad, he rose, and, as the night was wearing late, bade her adieu, intimating that he would see her in the course of the forenoon next day.

CHAPTER VI.

ON the return of Troven to his chambers, he found, by a note in his letter-box, that Villiers had come to town—an event which gave him great pleasure, as he was involved in different circumstances, which his feelings told him were full of difficulties, and requiring the advice of a friend.

Notwithstanding by this time it was late, he felt no inclination to go to sleep; for, all the day, and particularly the evening, he had been raised to a high state of excitement. Mrs. Halden, her misfortunes and her family, had interested him beyond expression. Her reception by Mrs. Servit, though in the end indemnified, was a disappointment, and tried his feelings while it moved his mirth. The scene in the prison was new and disagreeable to recollect. It was the first time he had ever seen evil the good of any one; and his mind, which was pitched to a high key, vibrated with anguish when he thought of a mother upbraiding her son for not being expert enough in thievery. Above all, he thought deeper and dreader of the woman's tale of crime, and the possibility

that he might be himself the destitute victim of her unfeeling dishonesty.

He sat down at the window of his apartment : it was high, and overlooked the southern buildings of the Temple. The night was calm and clear ; the stars glittered with unwonted brilliancy, and the constellations of the earth, which shone from the town on the opposite banks of the river, had a salutary influence in lifting his imagination from low cares and sordid fears. Only an occasional cry was heard, and the noises of the vast city around were sunk into a murmur, sometimes broken by silence.

He called to mind every thing that he could remember of himself from the earliest moment ; but memory could not transport him further back than his residence in the house of Mr. Pearl. He had some recollection of being found wandering on the common by Dr. Wycombe ; but the reminiscence of that event was hazy and obscure, and he was not quite certain whether it was from remembrance or an often-told tale that the circumstance remained with him. Before that event a confused accumulation of indistinct images rested, beyond which he could see nothing of any form. It was a mass of darkness, streaked with light ; but he could give no name to the elegance which, as often as he reverted to that beginning of memory, floated past, and was all the evidence he possessed of having been familiar with grandeur before he was found in rags.

When he had indulged in the kind of reverie which the stillness and beauty of the night inspired, with the joining of himself by a very slender

thread to various events, it seemed to him that the story, which he had heard from Mrs. Tomlins the preceding evening, could only apply to himself. He framed doubts of its truth ; but there was something in his own mind which strangely corroborated her narration ; and he determined to pursue the enquiry, with strictness, farther.

In the morning, after a night of restless ecstasy, he snatched a hasty breakfast, and went to Mr. Villiers, to whom he related the extraordinary transactions of the past day, and particularly the tale which interested himself.

Villiers listened to the latter with profound attention : he never interrupted the relation with one word of remark, but leant forward with his lips firmly closed, and his eyes betokening the most intense thoughtfulness. Even after the tale was told, he remained some time in this attitude without speaking, and then said —

“ The story of Mrs. Halden is a common one — many more affecting may be heard of among the distresses of the world : it is common-place, and the only remarkable feature about it is the robbery ; but that it too, belongs to the ordinary probabilities of life, my experience does not enable me to say. What to think of the scene between the mother and the son I know not ; but, according to books, the bad never lose sight of virtue ; your story shows the reverse, and, therefore, I should say it is, begging your pardon, a little apocryphal, or my reading of such things has been in books of that kind ; but the oddest part is that in which you are most interested. You are the child — I am sure you are — otherwise it could not possibly

have happened that your recollection, vague as it is, could have, in so many incidents, coincided with the woman's tale."

Troven then told him that he had made an appointment for that morning with the mother of the delinquent, Tomlins, and requested him to adjourn to his chambers. As they went thither, he mentioned that, among other expedients, he intended to put an advertisement in the newspapers, notifying the substance of what he had learned concerning the foundling.

Villiers decidedly approved of this project, and could not refrain from remarking, that one of the most striking features of his case was the inattention with which it had been marked, towards all those means calculated to excite attention.

"But," said he, "a sudden turn has taken place in your fortunes—an accident, a miracle; and it gives an assurance of better hope than we have entertained; of one thing you cannot but be certain—your parents miss you as much as you do them."

"Yes," said Troven, "if they are alive; but—"

"Ah!" interrupted Villiers, "I did not consider that: the careless manner in which the loss of you has been slurred over is, however, a proof that you are not an elder son."

"I think," replied our hero, "we may leave that question to be settled hereafter; my whole mind is occupied with the woman Tomlins' story, and I can think of nothing else. It has burst upon me like a new creation of light. I was in darkness and conjecture when it broke, nor can I credit myself as one awake when I think of what she has related."

“ It is very extraordinary,” said Villiers, “ that, after so many years when you have been lost, as it were, in oblivion, that you have stumbled on such a likeness of truth ; but a man does not require to grow grey-haired in the world, to see that the most improbable discoveries are brought about by the easiest means. What do you intend to make of the woman’s confession ?”

“ I know not,” said Troven ; “ I am perplexed. It is plain, that if she suspects the motive by which I am actuated, she is quite capable of having recourse to her invention for the facts that may be requisite to substantiate the proofs.”

“ Ay,” said Villiers ; “ doubtless, if she could attach you to a respectable family.”

“ She would not attempt that,” said our hero, “ unless she could make it good.”

“ *A priori*,” exclaimed Villiers, “ so much seems probable ; but if she attach you to a base parentage, she may hope to wrench from yourself a sufficient reward.”

“ You have an ill opinion of the world,” said Troven thoughtfully ; “ surely there is not such wickedness in the human heart as that for gain she would plunge me into such a depth.”

“ It is not credible,” said Villiers ; but we know that mankind often do worse deeds for small gains. By your description of the woman, she is of a bad kind.”

“ She is,” said Troven ; “ but there is a wildness about her which seems more akin to madness than to guilt. The story she has told me is, in itself, incredible, and would to you, or any other person, have so seemed ; but to me it had a meaning quite

miraculous. I have not been myself since she made the disclosure, and yet there are few but myself who would have listened to the ravelled tale."

"Have you told Mrs. Servit what you heard?"

"I have: but till she coolly thinks of what I said, it is not safe to listen to her, especially when the narrative does not chime in with her habitual belief."

By this time they were ascending, in a desultory manner, the stairs which led to Troven's chambers, and, without being under the least restraint, they were both disturbed in mind. Troven was absent and agitated; his thoughts were scattered, and he was as one who had heard strange tidings which involved all his fortune. Villiers was no less abstracted; but there was a kind of wonderment and confusion about him as perplexing to himself as the more troubled emotion of his friend.



CHAPTER VII.



It turned out that the examination of Jasper Tomlins in the morning, terminated fortunately for him. The gentleman on whose pocket he had made the attempt, and on whose alarm he had been seized, declined to prosecute him ; in consequence, he was almost immediately set at liberty ; for, that morning the sessions ended, and no one appeared against him : but his mother was at his elbow, and urged him to demand the restitution of the money, which could not be refused. The young man himself, from an inherent bashfulness that leant to the side of virtue, would not have been so bold.

Owing to the necessary delay on his account, she was later of appearing at our hero's chambers than he expected ; and when she did come, the liberated culprit came with her, but stopped at the foot of the stairs while she ascended.

The night he had passed in Newgate, and the verge of conviction on which he had stood, had wrought with him a great change. He determined to quit his hazardous way of life, and be-

come a sailor. Nature had, indeed, no hand in making him what he was; for he had in him the seeds of good qualities, with an integrity that had been injured, but not crushed, by his mother's nefarious instruction. Of his father nothing was known; but singular enough, it was in the end ascertained, that he was no other than the reckless individual whom Mrs. Servit had formerly known.

While the woman was upstairs, contrition was still at work within him; and among other acts of repentance, he resolved to seek out Mrs. Halden, and restore to her the notes. He had seen her come out of one of the Temple gates, and conjectured that she was probably known to somebody within. Accordingly, he stepped over to a wig-maker's shop, opposite to the foot of the stairs at which he was standing, and requested him to put a bill in his window, that such a sum of money had been found the preceding day at the Temple-gate, and would be restored to the owner, on giving a description of the notes, and a small gratuity to the finder.

This was not exactly the truth, and the stipulation for a reward not in the highest style of honour. But we must not question the motives of the penitent too narrowly. He conceived himself doing a very meritorious action, and well entitled to a reward. Many in the world do worse, and yet proudly pocket their recompense as easily won. But we have no time to moralize on the subject; for scarcely was the bill pasted on the pane, when his mother appeared, and required his attendance also in Troven's chambers.

On going there with her, Troven and Villiers

were expecting him. His mother had already told the story of the stolen child ; she had also told, as she called it, the acquittal of her son, and had acknowledged that he was again in possession of all the money which had been taken from him, and that he was then waiting for her at the foot of the stairs.

Without exactly making his friend acquainted with his motive, Villiers, in an easy manner requested to see the young man ; and as we have related, she brought him before them.

Among the peculiarities of Mr. Villiers, was a strong belief in the truth of physiognomy, and probably he had never a better subject before him, for Jasper Tomlins had a prepossessing countenance, his features were handsome, and there was a gentleness in his look to which his deplorable career had given only a cast of thought. He was as like an honest man as one by profession a rogue could be ; one, in short, in whom fortune was wholly to blame in placing him in a situation where he could be no other. So that the exhortation with which Villiers had prepared himself to urge the restoration of the money, was, he saw, unnecessary ; but with a kind of gentle persuasion, he mentioned the distress of Mrs. Halden, and hoped, that in token of his escape, he would give her back the money.

His astonishment was, in consequence, very great, when the ill-fated young man replied, that he had already done all in his power, by procuring the notice to be placed on the hair-dresser's window.

The triumph of Villiers at this incident was ex-

cessive; his belief in the truth of physiognomy was strengthened, and perhaps his exultation on that head was not less than his humanity. But, with the exception of this agreeable occurrence, the visit tended little to soothe the anxieties of our hero. The story in which he was so much interested, was repeated by the woman to Villiers, and varied in no particular from her recital the preceding evening. Villiers then admonished the young man to quit his dishonest courses, and heard, with equal surprise and pleasure, that it was his determination to leave London, and go at once to sea.

During the conversation between Villiers and her son, the woman stood by in silence; and when she heard this, she began to sob and weep bitterly. Troven, softened by her manner, thought this a sign of contrition, and spoke kindly to her; but Villiers, more experienced, was not so soon deceived; for, at something which Troven said, her ire could no longer be restrained, and she vented her indignation, by turning on her son, and with all manner of unfeminine abuse, called him a craven and a coward for deserting his colours so basely.

Had she been permitted, perhaps the scene of recrimination which had amazed our hero the preceding evening, would have been renewed; but Villiers interfered to prevent it, and the penitent was not so easily provoked; he only replied to many of her intemperate sallies with an unintelligible churme, that was often pathetic, and concluded by saying —

“Gentlemen, I was never taught but to do ill.”

An expression that quite drove his mother into frenzy. She actually danced with rage; and extending her arms, grinned with inexpressible passion. Troven, however, calmly requested the young man to go away, and return in a few minutes, when she would be quieter. Villiers, with more experience of the fluctuations of the human will, requested him to leave the money; and the scene that ensued baffled all description. The frantic woman could with difficulty be held from snatching the notes, when she saw them, and in other respects behaved with uncontrollable violence, in-somuch that it was necessary to call in assistance, and to give her into the custody of a constable.

The hideous spectacle which her ungovernable rage exhibited, at once awed, and was salutary to her son. It rivetted his resolution, to withdraw from the hazard of such sights, and it made him feel some touch of shame and remorse, as he retired from the chambers.

He lingered about the Temple till he saw her depart, and then, with a humble and modest air, went up to Mr. Villiers, and reminded him, that in giving the money, he had given him all he had; saying, he ought to get a reward; for if he did not, he had no alternative but to steal again.

Villiers gave him one of the notes; and becoming interested in him, requested him to call the following morning.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR hero took Villiers with him, with the intention of calling at Mrs. Servit's, in hopes of meeting there with Mrs. Halden, to restore to her the money; but, instead of going straight on, they turned westward to procure the insertion of the advertisement, and from the newspaper office they walked towards Southampton-row, Bloomsbury—a metaphysical device of Villiers, who fancied that Troven might recognise his father's house; for he had heard of instances in which younger children than he was when he was stolen, had shown as great a fidelity of memory; but when they arrived there, the place was undergoing a variety of changes, and no longer appeared the same.

The Duke of Bedford's house, which stood in that neighbourhood, was not then taken down, but all about was laid waste for the new improvements where Russell-square now stands, and the west side of Southampton-row was then being built upon: it is not, therefore, surprising that he did not recognize where he was when on the scene of his youthful gambols; but in returning down the west side of

the Row, and looking towards the houses on the east, something like a reminiscence broke upon his mind; it was, however, so indistinct and vague, that without some limning of the imagination he could not safely say that he had ever seen it before. They then proceeded to Mrs. Servit's lodgings, where, as they expected, Mrs. Halden and her two children were waiting.

We shall not describe what ensued, nor the thankfulness with which the widow received back her money, at the same time acknowledging that Mrs. Servit's generosity had superseded the importance of the restoration, and had enabled her to arrange for setting out in the afternoon to her father's.

Hitherto, Villiers had been so much occupied all the morning with Troven's case and the unhappy lot of Jasper Tomlins, that he had no time to enquire very particularly respecting Mrs. Halden, and knew no more about her than her name; but, after sitting some time, he casually remarked that the eldest of the children bore a strong resemblance to some one that he had formerly known.

At the observation, the mother became very much agitated, and burst into tears, from which she was some time of recovering; and Mrs. Servit, surprised as well as the gentlemen at the suddenness of her grief, led her into another room. After some time, Mrs. Servit returned, and mentioned, that surely the end of the world was at hand, for witnesses were witnessing one against another in an improbable manner; and, turning towards Mr. Villiers, enquired if he was ever resident with Mr. Ashton, in Yorkshire?

"Ashton," said he; "yes—my youth was spent

in his house ; it was the happiest period of my life. Ah ! well do I recollect when I was there a strippling : the dark side of the world has been towards me ever since."

"Then," cried Mrs. Servit, "you will have a remembrance of the Rev. Mr. Horncastle, who was the minister of the parish?"

"Ah ! the Rector," said he ; "I knew him well, and all his family : he had eleven children, and the nine eldest were daughters."

"And what did they call the youngest?" said she.

"Come, come," cried Troven, interrupting her, "don't be going about the bush in that way ; I know you of old ; when you have got a secret, you never hide the candle under a bushel, but set it on the top of the bottom, that every body may see it burning. Tell us what you wish to know."

But before she could make any answer, Villiers clapped his hands, and cried,

"It is Mary Horncastle that the child resembles."

"You are a witch of a guesser," said Mrs. Servit ; "she is perhaps not far off."

"Is it possible?" said he ; "is Mrs. Halden her?"

"I'll tell you without a fee," replied the matron ; "she is no other, and the child is said to be as like her at her age as a kitten is like a cat."

Upon this, Mrs. Halden was called in, and a mutual recognition between her and Villiers immediately took place. She had from the first known him, but soon perceived he had no recollection of her : she was much younger, and had outgrown the

image in his memory ; but when he recognized the likeness in the child, she could no longer repress her tears, nor the flood of tenderness which rushed upon her heart, with the sudden reminiscences of the long-forgotten, but, when remembered, the bright and beloved past.

With many persons, especially with those destined to misfortune, the scenes of the past are permanent pictures in the memory ; but with others of a more varied life, they are shifting shadows that come and go unexpectedly like the mirroring of the camera lucida. Mrs. Halden had been for many years so subject to an eventful life, that she had but little time to think of her childhood ; but the sight of one whom she had known in happier days a spruce and sprightly young man, on whose forehead was now impressed the mark of age, suddenly affected her, and brought on that paroxysm which she could not controul.

After some time had passed in conversation, Troven remarked that they stood at the confluence of many events, " especially," said he, " Mrs. Halden and myself. I was never so near the brink of destruction before—never so near the discovery of what I am ; and certainly it is not common that so many persons connected with the fate of each other should happen thus to meet."

Villiers shook his head. " That remark," said he, " shows your age, Mr. Troven ; as you grow older, you will be less surprised at more extraordinary conjunctures. When I read of improbabilities, it sets me a thinking, especially if they are each such as would be deserving of notice in the course of a long life. If they happen together, I

say to myself, had these things chanced far apart, would there have been any thing wonderful about them? But coming all at once, they seem the more improbable. Surely it is no very wonderful thing that I should meet in after-life, in London, with Mary Horncastle, whom I knew a mere child; and surely it is no such extraordinary thing to meet with a thief just relieved from jail, and so contrite for being there as to give up stolen property; but that it should belong to one that I have so known makes the matter seem improbable. We grow less credulous as we grow old, and meet also with fewer miracles."

Turning to Troven, he added curiously, as if he meant to give him instruction, "Whenever you hear a critic loquacious about the improbabilities of a story, rely upon it he is a greenhorn, and has walked to little purpose over the earth. If we could live long enough, and eternity is not wanted, we should soon discern that a finite being is not able to imagine a possibility without violating the established routine of nature. Our sphere is circumscribed, life short, and our world is only older than ourselves; we cannot say it is much more durable; all around us is brief and transient, and we assume too much when we think of improbable things. Improbability in its widest sense is only a bringing together of circumstances which, if apart, would not be very striking. In your case, Mr. Troven, I should be rather afraid, judging from the past, and after what has happened to you within these few days, that you were on the borders of one of Time's deserts. You have much to travel before you come to an oasis; for if you do soon, depend

upon it, it will be something more improbable than you have yet met with : my experience would lead me to fear, however, that you have a long way of dullness before you."

It was so, for his advertisement was followed by no seeming effect : as for the other things, they belonged to the common course of events. Mrs. Halden went to her father's, and little more was heard of her for some time ; Jasper and his mother ceased for a while to be of any importance ; Villiers, however, procured the lad a voyage to India as a sailor, which took him from the road to temptations in London.

CHAPTER IX.



VILLIERS was right : day after day passed ; no notice was taken of the advertisement, and our hero quietly ate his way to the bar in comparatively great penury. He was not, however, pinched into such desperation, as when his allowance from Mr. Pearl ceased ; but still he was extremely poor, and often submitted to feel the pressure of poverty rather than apply to Mrs. Servit, who resided in London solely on his account, and whose little income was entirely at his disposal till he was called to the bar. But his intimacy continued to ripen more and more into friendship with Villiers, whose peculiar character improved as he was better known, and his stingless misanthropy was always interesting and often amusing, as he had predicted ; however, the confluence of events, which had so surprised Troven, passed into a slower and easier stream ; but there was a mystery about the man which could never be fathomed.

During term-time he regularly attended the hall, although he declared that he never intended to be called to the bar. Sometimes, on the evening of

the last day of term, he went out of town, in what direction was never mentioned ; and, although with Troven, when in town, he was a constant companion, he never asked him to come with him.

He confessed that his circumstances were straightened, and that he was of no trade or profession, yet he pursued no business which occupied his leisure. All about his conduct was impenetrable ; but in his chambers in town he was superior to most men ; even in his eccentricities there was a show of rational purpose that made him distinguished as at once an odd and far-forecasting person. Troven frequently sought his company for his good sense, though tinged with melancholy.

From one of those undivulged excursions, to which we have alluded, he returned unexpectedly to his chambers several days before the approaching term, and, during the intervening time, he was more than ordinarily moody and thoughtful : towards Troven, with whom he was almost constantly, he was, however, unchanged. It was palpable that his mind was absorbed in something of an uncommon nature, and disagreeable to think of ; but as he showed no disposition to divulge what it was, our hero took no notice of it — certain that if it could be told with propriety, he was sure, in the end, to hear of it ; and that, if it was a secret which he ought not to know, it would be foolish and impertinent to yearn for the knowledge.

Whatever it was, when the term commenced, his diurnal routine was renewed ; the cloud passed from his brow, and he was again the old man.

Troven, who perceived this mutation of his mind, was glad to observe the gloom pass away, and pur-

sued his studies with undismayed assiduity. It is true that occasionally, as a young man, he did find this constancy of toil irksome, and now and then vented a querulous ban against fortune and his own helplessness ; but it was only occasionally that he gave way to these short fits of spleen, and, when he was tired of the law, he betook himself to those tasks of literature on which much of his livelihood depended. In one of those temporary revulsions against his profession, he had abjured Blackstone, or some of the other tomes which he had been reading, and refreshed his wearied spirit with a more congenial study, by embodying his vague thoughts in poetical composition ; but his verse flowed in a rugged channel, and bespoke the desultory nature of his attempt ; it was as follows :—

THE EDUCATION OF MEDEA.

Medea read with rapt enquiring eye,
While yet a child, the aspects of the sky ;
Marked, as the stars renewed and dimmed their glow,
What fruits and blossoms earth disclosed below,
What scaly tribes came numerous to the shore,
As village maids the rose or daisy wore ;
How, as the moon her varying light displayed,
The virgin's cheek was wont to flush or fade ;
And saw the sight of scars, on shield or mail,
Controul the tenor of the warrior's tale.

As reason ripen'd, and experience taught
To sift the fancy from the juster thought,
She traced her tablet with some curious sign,
Index of truth or harmony divine ;
And, strange enthusiast ! oft with fervent zeal
Before night-worship'd Hecate would kneel :

Her glowing breast was by this vigil charmed,
Amazement thrilling as devotion warmed.

Mauvra, high priestess, sternest of the train,
That fired the altars for the midnight slain,
With awful lore and mystic lecture strove
To win her service for the sacred grove.

When Thetis barred the golden gates of light,
And all the troubled Euxine rolled in night,
Rapt in her tower, which crowned a lofty steep,
And far o'erlooked the dark wreck-tossing deep,
The fraudulent Mauvra taught the royal maid
Appalling rites that guilty spirits aid ;
And ever, as the mariners afar
Beheld her light, a red malignant star,
They smote their bosoms, and despairing cried,
" To-night for us the wave-horsed furies ride !"
For still the sorceress, deep in omens versed,
Her spells before impending storms rehearsed.

With grief Aëtas saw his pensive child
Estrang'd from all by sapience dark and wild,
And call'd Kalos, a sage of gentle art,
To check the petrification of her heart.

By him informed, she learns with new surprise,
How moral nature forms the social ties
From sensual instincts, thus Kalos would say : —
" Affection flows and virtue claims her sway.
The tender mother by her babe caress'd,
Part of herself, holds fondly to her breast ;
Pleased with his lactile food, the infant clings
To his first paradise, and drinks the springs.
With opening ray his mind discerning soon
That smiling woman yields the soothing boon ;
The sex alike his infant transport share,
Nor knows his mother till he feels her care.
The fears and pains that tender care allays,
His filial worship to her heart repays ;
In graver kindness is the father shown,
And hence the reverent friendship of the son.

"Low at the hearth, with playful children round,
Where lays delight, and mystic tales astound,
Justice unsought the luscious wealth divides,
And confidence, with open breast presides ;
The quick-revenged and soon-forgotten wrong
But twine the cords that join the joyous throng ;
And love fraternal, ere the world can harm,
Deep in the bosom nestles close and warm.

"The slighter intimates of riper age
In due degrees the partial heart engage ;
For man, a being finite, frail, and vain,
Can few within his small embrace contain ;
And oft, by gusts of furious passion driven,
Breaks from the blest gregarian chain of heaven.
Hence public law, the comprehensive plan,
Drawn from the hearth, would link the race of man ;
But curs'd or honour'd with a double life,
The mental and corporeal still at strife,
We draw the maxims with a false pretence,
Still for the pleasures of the corporal sense,
Still to uphold the gorgeous dome secure,
The cause which makes and tempts to guilt the poor."

So taught the sage ; but oft the musing maid,
By the strange genius of her childhood sway'd,
With wayward questions marred his thought and theme,
Nor mark'd the use while pondering on the scheme.
Thus to herself, perplexed in thought she says,
"Why reigns this concord, and what influence sways ?
All things seem part of one consistent plan —
All but the mind, the mental part of man ;
The self-same instinct that Kalos reveals
The homeless prowler of the desert feels ;
The fiercest tiger o'er her brindled young
As kindly purs as e'er fond mother sung,
And all the progenies of savage blood
As joyous gambol as the human brood ;
Yet when matured, to vague adventures prone,
They part, and each to each no more is known.

But why should man alone so strangely prove,
The sense of justice and enduring love ?
'Tis thought, that energy which nothing bounds,
Which gives a god-like power to breathe sounds,
Fixed in the breast, it yet expanding flies,
Ranges the earth, and mounts into the skies—
Mysterious faculty ! when fails the frame,
Dost thou depart, as from the lamp the flame ?”

One sunny morning, as she chanced to rove
Beneath the aisles and arches of a grove,
Beside the margin of a brook that played
Through tangling brambles devious in the glade,
She saw intent an ancient beldame view
The mossy fringe for simples fresh with dew ;
Her rustic garb, though homely tissue, showed
Superior art, and pure as winter glowed ;
The brodered hem, enrich'd with tinting juice,
Shone bright and various from the floral hues ;
A basket pendant from a bough obtains
The fragrant antidotes of ails and pains.
Pleased with Yebrika's mild maternal air,
And neat attire, advanced the enquiring fair.

From her she learnt the aspects of disease—
To know the crisis, and what plants appease ;
For yet by words of unimpressive breath
She knew of sickness and all-hushing death ;
But now with sad anxiety desires
To see the moment when the life retires—
How fades the ray in the soul-lighted eye,
When age or anguish heaves the final sigh.

With pride Yebrika leads, her skill to show,
Medea, trembling, to the house of woe.

Stretched on his couch, and mournful friends around,
With life's last lingering throe a youth she found ;
On his pale cheek a rosy hectic plays,
His eye slow-setting glitters as it rays :



One wasted hand lies powerless by his side,
Grasped is the other by his widowed bride,
With sorrow frantic ; still she strives to gain
One conscious look of love, but strives in vain.
With folded hands the mourning mother near,
“ My last, my all ! ” exclaims, nor sheds a tear :
The father, calmly bending o’er the head,
Weeps as he gazes on the stiffening dead :
The princess kneeling at the feet appears,
In her right hand a shining lamp appears,
The steady flame her ruby left conceals,
And with soft shade her eager visage veils.
Apart Yebrika marks with awed surprise
The searching ardour of Medea’s eyes ;
A feeble sigh conveys the soul away ;
Death takes possession of the conquered clay,
And the sad relatives in silence led,
With covered faces leave the dismal bed :
Medea rising, smiles content, serene,
Resigns her lamp, and passes from the scene ;
All night she walks ; and wakeful round the hearth
Her maids sit wondering, and refrain from mirth ;
Nor, when the morning with its cheerful light
Broke up the dull monotony of night,
Were hushed her steps, but oft they, curious, heard
Her breathing short by rapture strangely stirred.
“ Ye parted spirits of mankind,” she cried,
“ Where — in what region do you now reside ?
Or haunt ye, viewless, still the stage of life,
And see our sin, our sorrow, and our strife ?
In social intercourse, say, do you move.
Or all in solitary silence rove !
Or rise ye brightening to the blest abodes,
Forget the world and mingle with the gods ?
O, that some gentle messenger would come
To tell your office and reveal your home !
Is there no art, no pharmacy sublime,
To charm a parted spirit back to time ?—
To mend the ruins of the mortal cell !
And with sweet incense lure it back to dwell ? ”

As when a youth, in some green vale remote,
First climbs the mountains round his native cot,
Surprised, he sees the opening view unfold,
Towers perched on cliffs, and steeples tipped with gold ;
The palace-dome white o'er the dusky wood,
Towns gaily mirrored in the bridged flood ;
The spiry city in the sunshine bright,
And the blue ocean boundless to the sight,
Where stately vessels, wafted by the gale
To climes unknown beyond the headland sail ;
Quick beats his bosom, and delighted still,
He climbs untired the world-disclosing hill ;
So on Medea widening knowledge wrought,
And each new wonder new incitement brought.

As he finished his poem, Mr. Villiers entered. It was at an unusual hour, but, considering their intimacy, not particularly remarkable. There was on his aspect, however, an ominous cloud ; and although his speech announced nothing of what it boded, still he could not be seen without awakening an apprehension of fear and curiosity.

Troven, although awed by his appearance, did not affect to notice the gloom in his look, but gave the manuscript into his hand, and requested him to look at it.

“ It is but a trifle,” said he ; “ but as I must now soon be called to the bar, it is necessary to provide for that event as well as I can.”

“ Poetry !” said Villiers, taking the manuscript, “ I fear you will reap but a scanty harvest if you cultivate that field ; poetry belongs to the age of acrostics and strange tricks, in overcoming the difficulties of using words in rhyme ; for at least the half of my life I have looked at verse-making

as an art analogous to arranging figures in arithmetic, of which the sum may be predicted. It is a thriftless art ; nothing can be said in it better than in prose, and the artificial twang twang of the verse belongs to a fashion that I suspect has gone by. No lady now sews the likeness of tapestry, and I am inclined to think they are but secondary characters who trouble themselves with versification. How long would you have been writing the thoughts in this poem, had you made use of prose and refrained from seeking rhymes ?”

“ It is not,” said Tröven, “ very easy to answer that question ; I do not think the subject could at all have been treated otherwise than in verse ; it would have been stale, flat, and unprofitable, had it been written in prose.”

“ Unprofitable, I believe you,” said Mr. Villiers ; “ but if it could not have been treated in prose, it was not worth the time you have spent on it. Every theme that deserves attention, is fitted for prose : it is only a substitution of words for thoughts, when you prefer verse : prose is moreover, the touchstone of all subjects : ideas may seem very well in verse, but they are fused when put into prose, and the dross floats uppermost : not that I object to poetry, though I do to verse. Poetry is a gift from heaven ; an endowment from nature ; something high and refined, like the viewless perfume of the rose, or the strain of melody : but verse-grinding is a mechanical art. I would as soon believe it to be the beautiful and holy essence of divine poesy, the voice and accent of angels, as the turning of a hand organ the faculty and skill of Mara.”

"Come, come," said Troven, "a truce, at present with these reflections, something has set your mind awry, and you will see, while the fit lasts, nothing excellent in nature."

"You are right," said Villiers: "nothing in this world gives me much pleasure, though we are all formed to be of it. Ah, yes, there is a degree of light that gives me pleasure, more dazzles, and less is uncertain. What a pity that such delicious splendour is ever precarious."

"I do not exactly understand you," said Troven, "you speak as mystically as a prophetess, and yet there is no meaning in the oracle."

"It may be so," said Villiers; "perhaps it is; but to pass that topic by. Have you seen the woman Tomlins of late, and is your faith unshaken in what she told you?"

"Not very lately; but I am still disposed to credit much of her story."

"Do you not credit it all?"

"Why, I should say that I have no reason to doubt any part of it, but I cannot say upon reflection it sounds all solid."

"I am glad to hear you say so; you will be the less disappointed if it should turn out false."

"What makes you say so?"

"If you had seen her lately — I do not know," said Villiers, "how I should have felt; but pardon me, I will tell you something."

Troven, at this, stooped eagerly forward, while the other said —

"Is it not singular that no answer of any kind was sent to your advertisement?"

"I own it is, very; and my mind has had mis-

givings ; it was in consequence of them that I gave you such a guarded answer. But what is the drift of your questions ?”

“ We have but reached,” said Villiers, “ the proper time to reply. I met the woman this afternoon ; she did not appear at first to recollect me ; but I stopped her, and made myself known.”

“ Well ; and what then ?”

“ Her conduct was very strange ; she appeared to have little recollection of her son, who, by-the-bye, must now be coming home ; and yet she had a very distinct recollection of you ; and then she began to tell your story, in which she wandered far from the point, and related a tale, that in many of its incidents bore no resemblance to her former confession.”

“ Well ?”

“ In sooth, Troven, I am sadly shaken in my faith in her ; I suspect that much of the story was a fabrication.”

“ It may have been,” replied Troven, thoughtfully ; “ but I was certainly left on the common as she described.”

“ True,” replied Villiers ; “ in that there is no change ; but her narrative is obscure, and not at all so consistent as her former tale.”

Troven added, as it were, in soliloquy —

“ Why do I believe in this uncertainty ? Why am I thus prompted to a vain pursuit ? If those who are interested in me felt as I feel, they would be as eager to have their curiosity gratified as I am.”

He then turned round to Villiers, and said, as if he mocked his peculiar lore — but he was at the time greatly serious —

"All day I have had a sense upon me of some impending misfortune. Nothing has touched me yet; but the shadow of the lowering falls black and cold upon my sense, and I have struggled to escape from the fancies it has given rise to."

"I am, my dear Troven, greatly concerned for you," cried Villiers: "you are involved in a dilemma that is almost a misfortune; but be yet of good cheer. It is, however, very strange that your advertisement fell still-born from the press, and it is afflicting, yea alarming, that the woman so prevaricates in her story. I have thought much about you, and I see nothing in your power to do, but to suspend all other cares, and devote yourself to discover what is concealed by the mystery around you."

"If it were worth while," said Troven; "but my relatives, whoever they are, care little for me, and I begin to think I should be equally careless about them."

"That," said Villiers, "is only a passing cloud; you could not, if you would, resign the anxiety which you suffer. The truth is the truth; and because its doubtfulness occupies so much of your reflections, the sooner it is ascertained the better."

"There is something good in that," said Troven; "but I do not perceive in what way any enquiry will serve me now."

"Now," cried Villiers, "would it not serve you to find your friends, and them in opulence, and willing to help you?"

"Yes," said he, "that would be a great discovery, and appease many an hour of sore anxiety; but if the discovery should lead me to ascertain

that I am in truth no better than the beggar brat who was found upon the common ——”

“ Hope better things,” said Villiers ; “ that sentiment belongs to me, and but for your thoughtfulness I would have used it. But tell me why you say now ?”

“ Did I say so ? then it was my spirit that spoke unconsciously. I have no more cause to use that word than I have ever had ; but it is late, Mr. Villiers ; I will see you early in the morning, and shall have reflected by then on what I ought to do.”

Villiers rose, at these words, from his seat, and shook him with more than ordinary cordiality by the hand ; but Troven remarked that he was still invested with that air of dismay which he had first noticed ; and as he bade him good night, he exclaimed to himself as he shut the doors —

“ Gracious ! what can have been the prevarication of that woman ? for it is only her speech that has so affected him.”

He then returned to his chair ; and after sitting some time in silence, retired for the night.

CHAPTER X.



SLEEP fled from the pillow of Troven, and he could not controul his thoughts, which were all the night busy with conjectures. An apparition of Mrs. Tomlins haunted him : her story was singular, but it tallied with his ; nothing, in all his life, had so disturbed him ; for, although Mr. Villiers had spoken of it as no very extraordinary thing, there was an impression upon him which she had assisted in producing, at once solemn and disconsolate. It is thus that at times we are affected with our own efforts to discover the truth, and they never fail to make us in the end dissatisfied : we feel, as it were, like a dog on the outside of a glass window — we see all within, yet we conceive ourselves under an interdict of the nature of a charm.

Immediately after breakfast he went to Mr. Villiers' chambers, and told him very frankly how restless had been the night, and his groping after conjectures that eluded his grasp.

“ I do not say,” he exclaimed, “ that I have wasted my strength in a vain endeavour to catch

the truth, but I am laden with a depressing presentiment."

Villiers, by this time, was more master of himself than he appeared on the preceding evening.

"I will not disguise from you," said he, "that I was exceedingly molested last night. That odious woman called on me in the evening with an unmotherly obscurity in her remembrance of her poor son, and had exceedingly provoked me. How she imagined that I would exercise any influence over you for her behoof, cannot be divined; but she told me an unintelligible story, which she meant I should substitute for the tale she had related to you, and, if I had been less interested in the event, perhaps I might have done so, only there was an effort to make out that she was more your friend than we have any reason to believe; and stated that the child, being left alone on the common, was an accident never intended, and has, ever since, sat heavy on her conscience: from which I infer, that she has obtained some knowledge that you are no other than the stolen child, and that she deprecates your resentment."

"It is an entangled story," said our hero, "and conjecture leads to no issue; but I agree with you that she must have heard something of what you say, and is paving the way to fasten herself upon me. What can she have heard? All that I can make out from her tale is, that some other person of her sordid rank is acquainted with my story!"

"I think so too," said Villiers: "who can it be? But take courage from it, for it brings you nearer the goal of your wishes. We must find

out how she has imagined that you are the child she wandered on the common."

Villiers would have said more, but he was interrupted by a knocking at the door, and, rising to see who was there, ushered in a portly, good-conditioned parson. As soon as he came to the light, Troven sprung up and exclaimed, — " Dr. Wycombe !"

Mutual greetings then took place ; — he was in search of our hero's chambers, and, by mistake, had come to the door of Villiers, but the encounter set all right.

After enquiries and congratulations, the old man seemed a little restrained and awkward, and, at last, he proposed to call at another hour, when he and Troven could be together.

Troven, who had never any particular predilection for the Doctor, said at once that Villiers was his friend.

At all times very stately in his phraseology, the Doctor delivered a compliment to Mr. Villiers in terms that would have done honour to Dr. Johnson, and, turning to Troven, said —

" It will surprise you, Mr. Troven, although these are the holidays, that I should confess my main errand, in coming now to the metropolis, has been to see you. Do you know Mr. Troven, that, within these few days, five is the utmost, I have been molested, astonished, and am beginning to be confounded by a strange woman, asking amazing interrogations at our door. She was not a lady — I should be most blameable to assert that she had aught of that consequence about her : she wore a straw bonnet deteriorated by age ; a red cloak, which bore the

marks of a gift about it ; shoes that were in a state of dilapidation ; and stockings, if I do not mistake, she had none at all."

" It is Mrs. Tomlins," said Villiers ; " her bonnet and her cloak attest the fact."

" You are right," replied the Doctor ; " Tomlins is her name, and she is addicted to snuff."

" My dear Doctor," said Troven, " what has all this to do with me ?"

" Patience, young man, patience ; I will relate the whole as it happened, but give me time. This woman enquired if I had any recollection of a child being many years ago found wandering on the heath. At that instant a flash of light burst into my brain, and I thought of you. Then I told her who was sobbing very audibly as she put the question, that I had found you myself ; that you had been educated at the expense of Mr. Pearl, who had completed your education at Oxford ; that you were now in London studying the law ; and that, if you could afford it, you would make a handsome compliment to whomsoever would disclose your parentage. But just as I enunciated these truths, somehow she, with a strange evasion, escaped out of the room, and I have searched in vain to find in what direction the apparition has fled ; for, as it happened to be a wet day, I was sitting in my slippers, and, before I could get my shoes, she was off, and for ever evaded."

Troven made no answer to this oration, but looked expressively to Villiers, and the Doctor proceeded —

" After a vain attempt to find why she had fled, I became, on your account, much perplexed, and

Mrs. Wycombe, calling to mind that it was the holidays, suggested to me that I ought to go to you at once in London and communicate what I had discovered."

"I am," replied Troven, who was acquainted with the pompous nothings in which the Doctor indulged — "I am greatly obliged to you ; and what is the discovery that you have made ?"

Villiers could scarcely preserve his gravity, and turned aside to conceal his disposition to laugh ; but the Doctor reddened at the question, and said —

"You are, I see, the same youth you were of old ; what could you expect after eighteen years — a woman with a mantle of scarlet enquiring for you at my door ? Depend upon't it was a portentous sight, and betokened something that is to come to pass."

Troven saw that he had trodden with more severity than he intended on the Doctor's corns, and backed out as well as he could, saying —

"Your information, Doctor, is the more worthy of attention, as it coincides with some intelligence that has been puzzling us exceedingly ; last night the self-same woman, whom you have described, called on my friend Mr. Villiers here, and surprised him by her knowledge of me. We could not conjecture where she had received her intelligence, which was greatly to the point."

The air in which this was said had the effect of alleviating the Doctor's bristles, and he continued —

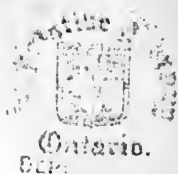
"Upon the counselling of Mrs. Wycombe came I to London ; for clear it is, that the discovery of

yourself is near at hand, and fitting it is that I should be upon the spot : for if it chance that you are proved to be one whom we all have ever thought, nothing less could be expected from me."

The Doctor, having delivered himself, had very little to say more. Troven, however, was obliged to him ; for, in this instance, he had shown more heart and disinterested activity than he had given him credit for ; and concluded by proposing that they should meet in the afternoon, at the Mitre and dine together.

" I shall just," said he, " step to my book-seller's in the Row, and order the books wanted in the school next year ; for I have heard that two or three new ones have been printed, and I have come to London to see if they will suit."

Thus cancelling the obligation he had conferred, by forgetting that he had just before said it was only on Troven's account he had come to London.



CHAPTER XI.



IN the interval between the time when Dr. Wycombe had called at Mr. Villiers's chambers and the hour appointed for dinner at the Mitre, our hero went to Mrs. Servit's. He always felt towards her a filial respect, and he had much to communicate concerning himself and the arrival of the Doctor in town.

On reaching her lodgings, he found her dressed, and preparing to go to his chambers; but on seeing him she desisted.

"Come away," said she; "I have been just out of the body to see you, and could no more sit still on my seat than a pea remain quiet in a frying-pan. Do you know that there has been a randy woman in a red cloak, well-awaying, as she said, with an awakened conscience; and, as sure as the sun's in the heavens, she has had some hand in wandering you when you were a helpless bairn."

"Indeed," said Troven, desirous to hear what she had to say, and affecting no knowledge of the woman, though the red cloak settled her identity.

"Aye," said Mrs. Servit; "and she came to this

house, little dreaming who was in it, and told her tale in a very penitent manner."

"What did she say?" replied Troven; "and how came she here?"

"As for her coming here," said Mrs. Servit, "that's a question among divines; but what she said had really something very like a slake of truth in it; and if it be not true, I know not what a matter of fact is. Howsomever, seeing her in great distress, and pricked in the conscience, I invited her into the room, never letting wot who I was, and had a very solid and satisfactory conversation with her. Hech, sirs! but they have a sore time o't who have a troubled conscience."

"And what did she tell you?"

"Tell me! I'm no sure that I heard with my own ears; but she told me, as sure as death, that on the day and date that Dr. Wycombe found you cast away on our common, she left, by need of straits, a neighbour's child upon the heath; and, once away, always away—she could not recover it, though she had been down in the country to see if it was a thing held in remembrance there; for her conscience was as if it had been threshed with a rod of iron. Now, was it not a very wonderful thing how, in all this town of London, she was directed to me? The hand of Providence is plainly in it, otherwise that could never have been."

"If it was by chance," said Troven, "it is very wonderful."

"Can you doubt it?" said Mrs. Servit; "there was, she sobbing and sighing, and pat to the point in every thing she said."

"But how did it all end?"

“ I was in a fluster,” said Mrs. Servit, “ from the moment she spoke of our village and the wandered bairn ; and I know not very well what I said ; but, quo’ she, a reverend doctor told her all about it, and how the child, meaning you, was learning law in this town, which was most distinct, was it not ?”

“ Well, but what was the result ?” said Troven, beginning, by this time, to be a little impatient.

“ I’ll tell you : seeing the woman of a contrite spirit, I told her to come back in the evening, when I would have more leisure ; but I said nothing of you, for in this jeopardy I thought that I should keep my thumb upon that till I heard what you would advise.”

It requires no particular exposition to show that Mrs. Tomlins was now eager in the pursuit of the parentage of the child whom she had herself stolen.

Observant men have noticed the providential coming together of persons interested in the doom of one another, by which curious issues are brought about. Life, indeed, consists of numberless dramas, each of which is winded up by the fate of some individual ; all play not first-rate parts, but are subservient to the fortunes of those that do ; and it may be of some use to such as do not look much at the real world to know the existence of this curious arrangement.

But to resume our story. There was no accident, as Mrs. Servit had conceived, in Mrs. Tomlins calling upon her ; she had learned, in the expedition which terminated in her interview with Dr. Wycombe, that the child she was in quest of had been brought up by Mr. Pearl, and that, although he was dead, yet Mrs. Servit was alive and

residing in London. This led her to obtain the address, and accounts for the interview of which Mrs. Servit has related the particulars. But the sudden alertness of the woman in her pursuit of the stolen child was inexplicable. From the period that she left it on the common, she had never thought of it till after the arrest of her son, and it could not be traced in what manner, by that incident, she was induced to make any enquiry. Yet we find she did : we find also that she did not appear to feel as mothers do for her son ; she upbraided him, even in prison, for his inexpertness as a thief, and she again reverted to the same awkwardness when before Troven at his chambers. When Villiers procured him a situation on ship-board, she parted with him without regret, or rather with a grudge, that by leaving the country he would be no longer useful to her as an agent. She was, indeed, a depraved woman, and had spent her life in a state that may be described as made up only of different shades of iniquity, like some females that may be met with in London, who, after the bloom of beauty has departed, survive in wretchedness, but know not the stings of misery.

Her origin was not known, but her education had evidently been conducted with care : she spoke a language far above her condition, and amidst the moral garbage, as it may be called, of her conduct, a degree of taste sometimes glittered out from among a deplorable mixture of the coarsest associations. She was, indeed, a lost one ; how she came to be such an outcast, could not be known ; and, in consequence, there was a mystery about

her, arising solely from the silence which she preserved respecting her early life, that could never be fathomed — a blot upon the world, as much as human nature could be — a dreadful being ; for it was sometimes traced in her conduct that she was actuated by an intent to be worse than she could be. But still, with all this, she was human — not more so, however, than in appearance she resembled the virtuous and the fair who adorn society.

Soon after the departure of her son, she was seized with the mania to discover Troven, in the manner described. Whether it was to supply some want she felt in the absence of him who assisted to provide for her by his dishonest courses, or from that self-indulgence which prompted her to many unaccountable things, cannot now be ascertained ; but it so happened, that at this very time she was so seized — induced by the sudden hunger of curiosity, part of that impetuous character which led her in all things to the immediate gratification of her desires. Indeed, with this unfortunate woman actions sprung not from motives, but from impulses — she did not consider the effect of her conduct, but only her own enjoyment in the act.

Beyond the discovery of what had become of the child, she had at first no other purpose to serve than to satisfy a longing desire. She as suddenly gave up the pursuit. She was, in fact, one of those persons who, whatever their pursuit may be, act with surprising fervour, and obtain a credit for zeal, although it is a blind animal impulse. It does not often happen that persons of a wild and reckless disposition show themselves in this light ;

but, nevertheless, they may be seen, and busy about the attainment of that which, when they possess, they appear to set no value upon. It is, however, no part of our intricate story to speak of Mrs. Tomlins' aberrations; she is but an incidental character; nor would it much delight the reader, pleased to contemplate the sunny side of human nature, to record her errors. Let it, therefore, suffice, that, whether from disease or passion, her mind was in everlasting thrall; and, perhaps, on some other occasion, we may have an opportunity of depicting one as much under the influences of sense, and yet seemingly as much governed by the influences of the understanding.

CHAPTER XII.



It was now evident that at this juncture there was a strange tendency in many things, to effect the discovery of Troven's birth, and we pass over in a hasty manner, amusing occurrences, that but for the pressure of these circumstances, we should rejoice to relate. Among others, therefore, that we can only allude to in our rapid narrative, is the dinner at the Mitre with Dr. Wycombe, from which, owing to the incidents of the day, our hero and Villiers prematurely found it necessary to rise and go to the chambers of the latter, where they expected the outcast to call.

It was a drizzly evening, not exactly a wetting palpable rain, but one in which no person stirs abroad who is not incited by business or care; the sky was hazy, and the smoky canopy of London made the air opaquely obscure; the spirits partook of the universal dullness of nature, and the conversation between our hero and Villiers, while waiting for Mrs. Tomlins, was heavy and with no particular object. At last a gentle knocking was heard at the door.

“Here she is,” said Villiers, rising to give admission; but on opening it, instead of Mrs. Tomlins, a much older person, small of stature, and of a grotesque appearance, surprized him in her place.

“I come,” said she, “from Mrs. Tomlins, whose illness has encreased, and the night being unwholesome, she cannot wait upon you, and, therefore, would be glad if you would come to her.”

The messenger, aged and singular, would have attracted attention, even had she not delivered her message with a degree of neatness that was in striking contrast with the meanness of her dress.

Instead of immediately answering, Villiers looked round to Troven, who, with a glance expressed his surprise, and especially at the bold equality of the request. Villiers then desired the old woman to walk into the room and sit down, but she declined the invitation with an air of some dignity, notwithstanding her small stature and beggarly appearance.

“Has Mrs. Tomlins,” said Villiers, “been long unwell?”

The old woman replied, “For some time before she went into the country; and her disease has been growing ever since.”

“Where does she live?” said Troven.

“I have come to conduct Mr. Villiers to her lodgings, for without a guide he would not easily find them.”

“This gentleman,” said Villiers, pointing to Troven, “will go with me, and we will accompany you immediately.”

Instead of making him any answer, the old woman really graciously signified her acquiescence;

and immediately the gentlemen went with her, a good deal amazed at the style of her behaviour, which was that of a lady—at once easy and guarded. In fact the old woman had been originally in a sphere that seemed to preclude the humiliation into which she had fallen. In her youthful years she had been the very minion of her society, but she had stooped to folly; and having long survived all attractions and beauty, was now the landlady of the outcast.

She conducted Villiers and Troven to a wretched ruinous dwelling, in the neighbourhood of where Hungerford-market now stands; and having shown them into a sorry garret where, on a humble pallet, the invalid was lying, she, with equal tact and superiority withdrew, leaving them with Mrs. Tomlins.

The gloom of the apartment prevented them from being very distinctly seen, but the sick woman, raising herself on her bed, enquired of Mr. Villiers, who went straight towards her, who it was he had brought with him. Perhaps most people in this situation, would have equivocated in the answer, but he replied at once, with his characteristic frankness, that it was Mr. Troven, whom she had been so anxious to see. She then added,

“You have done well to bring him, for I fear that I have not long to live, a change has been working with me for some time, and cannot long be withstood. I loath myself, but I must suppress the feeling.”

Something in the tone with which she said this, was exceedingly affecting, and Villiers, without very exactly estimating his own words, replied,

that he was sorry to see her so ill, but hoped that her indisposition was only temporary.

She said :

“ You speak the parlance of the world ; you have no hope in the matter ; how should you ? What is there in the world to me that I should have any desire to live ? ”

Villiers said nothing, but sat down on a chair at her pillow, and our hero drew another to the foot of the bed, and sat down also. The little bustle which this movement occasioned interrupted her, but when the gentlemen were seated, she resumed :

“ You have not come to a penitent,” said she, “ for what is the use of that ? Can any repentance restore me to what I was ? No, I am a wretch ! and such I will die.”

Villiers, with somewhat more levity in his accent than Troven was quite prepared for, said,

“ I have not come to be a father confessor : tell what you have to say that you think interesting to me ; I have brought Mr. Troven to hear it.”

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Tomlins, “ have you had such experience of life, that you make so light of existence ? ” and giving a kind of convulsive sob, she wildly added,

“ I was first sickened at the moral leprosy with which I am encrusted, by seeing that my son would, but for my lessons, have been a good man. His natural virtue put my depravity to shame ; had he been a bold, free-hearted, reprobate, his mother would have been pleased ; but I saw in him, living still, the seeds of good, and for that I began to hate him.”

“This is wild discourse;” said Villiers, “what have you to tell me?”

“Nothing, nothing, of what I was, but this: I would have quenched all good, because nought of it could again be mine. That poltroon! but I will not speak of him to you. Oh, Sir! I have a mother’s heart, but it is in the devil’s grasp.”

In uttering these words she bent her face upon his hand, and gave way to a feminine and maternal flood of tears, after which she exclaimed:

“I will no longer with my fate contend: there is a spring in this cold, rocky, breast—a living water bursting forth: from the hour my son upbraided me as the parent of his guilt, I have struggled to resist the truth, and tried to pluck his image from my heart, but disease has softened my nature and made it human. I would not now be damned.”

Mr. Villiers seemed more affected by her expression than could have been expected from his equanimity, and endeavoured to soothe her; but it was not until he had long solicited her to composure, that she seemed to feel any disposition to revert again to the fate of Troven, although it was on that business she had required his presence. Whether actual indisposition, or that sudden perturbation of feeling, which sometimes breaks upon the most hardened when they are least prepared, had fastened upon this unhappy woman, cannot be determined; but it was quite dark before she was in a condition to speak of Troven’s fate, and her disease had increased so much, that she was often incapable of renewing the disclosure. In this predicament both the gentlemen became alarmed, lest in her weakness and agitation she would become

unable to repeat her confession ; and Villiers, in haste, requested Troven to go for other witnesses, while he took it down in writing. It was fortunate that he acted thus ; for before other witnesses could be obtained, she was very ill : however, when they came she understood their purpose, and endeavoured to repeat the story she had in the first burst of her contrition told to Troven himself. Her mind, however, wandered ; the rack and delirium of incoherent thought took such possession of it, that no consistent narrative could be framed from her raving ; and her disease seemed to augment with her mental convulsions, for her distress deserves no lighter epithet.

The gentlemen and the witnesses stood round the bed with awe and a feeling of horror, as the light which the old landlady brought into the room revealed the ghastly countenance of the invalid.

Seeing no abatement in the paroxysm they went away, Troven and Villiers intending to call next morning, but when they did, she was no more ; and they were frustrated of the clue which they expected might lead to a discovery.

CHAPTER XIII.



THE sudden and dismal death of the outcast, before any authentic memorial of the story that she told could be obtained, filled our hero with inexpressible grief. Even the cheerful temperament of Mrs. Servit was deeply dismayed, and Villiers, though he said nothing, sympathised with her sorrow.

Much appeared in the narrative of Mrs. Tomlins, that had inspired them with high hopes ; but these were blighted, and there was in her prevarication with Villiers something that barbed to him the pain of disappointment. For some time, indeed, there was little to be envied in the fate of Troven. His law-suit continued ; but as far as friends taking an interest in his life and endeavours, his lot was mitigated by the affectionate old lady, and the austere, but increasing, kindness of Villiers.

At last the time arrived, when Troven could be called to the bar. The only diffidence he felt in taking a step that was to lead to the gates of fortune and fame, many have experienced, but few so

keenly. Our hero felt all the peculiar humiliations of his situation with inexpressible anguish. Hope was eclipsed by fear; and although he did not actually despond, yet the apprehension of being obliged to retire from the portal was ever present in his mind. To Villiers his painful anxiety was disclosed; but from others it was concealed, as if too sacred to be profaned. It were, however, a digression from our story to descant on his feelings at this time; the reader can only conceive them who has himself felt them.

Some time before the eventful day arrived, Villiers called on Mrs. Servit, apprehensive that his friend might not have courage to disclose to her how much then her friendship would avail, and told the facts of the case, which however, her kindness had in some degree resolved to anticipate, but she was not aware of the amount required. Villiers himself acknowledged to her his own poverty, but he offered to contribute, as far as his means permitted, towards the formation of a sum of money adequate to supply the professional necessities of Troven. She, however, on hearing the amount mentioned, cheerfully undertook the whole, saying —

“ I hope he has more sense than to forget how much he is dependent on strangers. What I have he shall freely share; and if he is prosperous, or discover that he is come of the rich and great, he will repay me; if he does not thrive, he will also have from me a tear.”

Thus, before the time arrived, the good-hearted Mrs. Servit, seeing him one evening pensive, thought that his condition occupied his meditations, and to cheer him disclosed her benevolent

intentions. It thus came to pass, that he was quietly called to the bar, and entered upon his professional career.

But, as it was naturally expected, he had a steep and barren hill to climb. Without connexions he could find no briefs; and though his literary labours found employment for his pen, day after day passed without his legal studies yielding any fruit. He was known, however, in the courts as a young man of superior acquirements; and though he was none employed, there was a persuasion in the minds of many, that he was destined to eminence, and his general deportment encreased this presentiment, insomuch, that at last it began to be remarked, with wonder, that he had never made an appearance in any cause.

We are not sure that in this respect he stood alone; but certainly there was no one so highly thought of who had so little to do; but still he wore a cheerful aspect, and all about him bore an impress of worth that fortune could not long withstand.

One evening, when he was sitting in his chambers alone, in little disposition at the time to write, and ruminating on his friendless condition, which at times he began to think of with more and more sadness, a solicitor in the neighbourhood called upon him abruptly.

“Mr. Troven,” said he, “I have come to you in a way that requires an apology, and yet I know not how to make it. I will tell you, however, the case, and you shall judge of the difficulties in which I am placed.”

“He then related to him the particulars of a

Chancery suit that had long been existing between two opulent families.

“Neither of them,” said he, “now care much about the result; but the law-suit is an heir-loom, which they both make a point of honour, without heat, of carrying on to the ultimate decision of the House of Peers. Now, the junior counsel for the defendant is in precarious health; the case is to be finally heard in the House very soon, and from the state he is in, I am afraid he will be unable to attend there. In this dilemma it has suddenly occurred to me, and I have spoken of the matter to him, that we should employ another junior counsel in case of need, but with the understanding, that unless the need arise, he will not be called upon to take any part in the proceedings. With this idea your image was presented to my mind, not as one who would be likely to accept of such an extra-professional engagement, but as the one we ought to try to have.”

“I see,” said Troven, “your situation; and perhaps, if I had more to do, I should be less candid in my answer: in fact, I am sick of hope deferred, and would do any thing not disgraceful to get employment, or rather let me say freely, to know what a fee is made of; and, to save you from what I know must be your awkwardness, I say at once that I shall be very glad to be engaged as you propose, and I will not consider the engagement of quite so light a nature as your candour leads me to think you expect. I will do my utmost to make myself master of the case, and will consider it a god-send to be brought forward: so

say no more about it, or about the violation of etiquette — I am ready, and your man.

The solicitor was gratified by his alacrity, and doubled the intended fee, carrying with him an agreeable impression of the manners and talents of Troven, regarding which he delighted afterwards to speak : thus from a slight inflection, as it may be called, of professional consequence, Troven secured at once an influential friend, to whom he became subsequently indebted for many favours.

Soon after the solicitor left him, Villiers called and found him in high spirits with this omen of success. It had been the practice of that wayward but sterling character to look frequently in upon Troven, and never to part from him without regret that one so endowed by nature, and enriched by study, should pine in neglect,

“ And waste his sweetness on the desert air.”

Troven told him what had happened, and was about to express the mortification that he felt in consenting, in all probability, to play a cipher to one who, though a rising personage, he regarded in many respects as his inferior.

“ Don't fret,” said Villiers, “ but thank heaven that your circumstances have constrained you to do a very wise thing. You have been long enough at the bar to know that the world is less guided by ability than interest, and to ascertain that you have nothing to rely upon from connexions. It has so happened, that you have obliged, by your frankness, a very powerful man. This, which was from necessity, had it been from policy, would have been very masterly. Now, all that I have to

say is, never for a moment think you may not be called upon to speak. Study till your brains, if I may say so, be turned into oil, till you have made yourself master of the case. Think every thing at stake, and leave no stone unturned till you feel yourself in a condition to snap your fingers in the face of the Lord Chancellor : do that, and leave the upshot to Providence ; on my life you will not then fail."

Troven expressed heartily his thanks for this judicious advice, promising to follow it to the syllable.

CHAPTER XIV.

BUT although the solicitor treated the cause with indifference, it embraced many interesting points which required skill and eloquence to set forth properly: nor must his conduct be ascribed to inattention. The parties opposed to each other in the suit were nearly connected, and their efforts were paralyzed by a doubt in their own minds if they were the true heirs. Their luke-warmness infected their men of business, and long litigation with their friendly reciprocity had cooled in them, if they had ever felt it, the fervency of enmity; but from the moment that Troven was so accidentally employed in it, it was destined to undergo a change.

As we have said, he had but little to do: without fortune and connections in the world, he had only talents to befriend him: his taste and genius would have led him to cultivate the belles lettres, but studies of that kind were not the fashion of the age; Hume, and Robertson, of Scotland, had set an example which every one followed, and histo-

rical disquisitions were the general rage. In this department our hero had so distinguished himself, that he was in great request by the publishers of ephemeral works; and his natural ability was sacrificed in the pursuit of studies which, had he been allowed to follow his own bent, would have been but secondary.

But although his name is not radiant in the class of literature in which, by endowment, he was calculated to shine, the prevalent fashion had given him habits of research which were favourable to his professional career. The studies in which he had found most profit induced predilections that made him an excellent antiquary, and had sharpened his faculty of discovering truth when it was deepest hid amidst extraneous rubbish. He therefore brought to the case a mind prepared with shrewd intelligence, and a patience of disposition, the result of a necessary discipline.

As this cause was the first in which he had ever been engaged, he resolved, as Villiers had advised, to make himself master of all its incidents, and to find the law which governed them. He was not, however, entirely actuated by professional ambition; his taste led him to do so judiciously, as he was aware of the value that might arise from his exertions. Indeed, the case throughout had been so negligently treated, that its true merits were not known among the lawyers, and Troven himself had no spur to his efforts from celebrity. However, when he received the briefs, and particularly some papers which he required, and which no one before had ever sought, he saw it in a different light. He applied himself, therefore, to the whole subject in

an assiduous manner, that can only be accounted for by previous habits, his genius, and the interest of the different circumstances which he had to develope.

Being employed for the defendant, his assiduity and enquiries were first directed to investigate the grounds on which the other party conceived they could establish their claim; and he soon discerned, that his client, without having a clear right to the matter in litigation, had unquestionably a colouring from law for the possession he retained; but the claimant, he also soon perceived, had not so good a claim as a third unknown party; and accordingly he set himself patiently and sharply to prove, that whatever were the defects in the cause of his client, the plaintiff had not a shadow of right to the property while that unknown party was not heard.

This view of the question had never occurred to any one before; the parties, the solicitors and the lawyers, thought only of the case before the Court; none of them considered, at least none of the professional gentlemen, that the interest of a third party might be a bar to all proceedings.

Troven having ascertained that a superior right to that by which the defendant held and the plaintiff drew, might be established by a third party, set his whole mind to work, and interested by so remarkable an incident, collected arguments and illustrations, more than was necessary, not only to a demonstration of the truth, but the fullest satisfaction of feeling.

With all this labour, which was of the most abstruse and yet pathetic kind, he had little hope of

being required to speak. The superior counsel was a man high in the profession, and the junior counsel, though no less able, was, as we have stated, in precarious health ; but Troven found himself greatly excited by the subject ; its impressive incidents awakened his attention, and before it was to be heard at the bar of the House of Lords, he had made himself acquainted with its true character, and the infirmities of the opposite party's case.

At last the day for the hearing came on, and there was a considerable assemblage of Peers on the occasion ; for a divorce cause was to be tried after counsel had been heard in the case in which our hero was engaged. Among others present, was Lord Buyborough, the brother of our hero ; and it happened, as it has done in similar cases, that nothing could be more propitious than the business of the day to attract an intelligent crowd, for it is a curious circumstance, that a divorce case has the effect of bringing down to the House the most refined, sentimental, and intelligent part of it. But there seemed no chance that Troven would be afforded an opportunity of being heard ; the other two counsellors with which he was united, were both there, and the gentleman whose place, in case of accident, he was engaged to supply, seemed in glee and health ; just, however, as he stepped forward to the bar to make his statement, he was seized, as with a touch, by a sudden illness, which obliged him to be removed from the House of Lords into another room.

Troven was greatly agitated by this incident, especially when it was proposed that the case should be adjourned ; but still he mustered self-

possession enough to inform the solicitor that he had prepared himself for the accident, and requested that he might take the place of his unfortunate friend ; a proposition to which the solicitor readily assented, for he did not, as we have mentioned, think the case of that importance which a patient man of genius had discovered.

Troven, when he appeared at the bar, was entirely unknown ; the Lord Chancellor had seen his face before in Court, but did not recollect his name. This circumstance, as well as the sudden illness of his colleague, his youth also, created a great stir in his favour ; and, before he began to speak, there was a degree of silence and attention throughout the house, that showed their Lordships really could listen to counsel below the bar. Lord Buyborough was particularly excited ; it does not admit of explanation why he was so, but the air of Troven attracted his notice ; and, on understanding the cause of his appearance, his Lordship became interested in his boldness, from which, with many others, he augured favourably. Troven himself, could with difficulty repress his emotion ; it was visible to all ; and the Chancellor, like the rock in the desert, smitten by the rod of Moses, yielding to the humanity of the moment, encouraged him to proceed.

At first our hero was low, tremulous, and a little confused, but there was a melody in his tones, and a latent strength in his voice disclosed, as he proceeded, which gradually procured him more and more attention. He began with a brief, and upon the whole clear statement of the case, which was exceedingly satisfactory to the solicitor, who ob-

served to a by-stander, that the sick man himself could not have done better.

When Troven had made his statement, which he did tolerably well, and his auditors understood that there was a third party not in court, whose right was, above all question, preferable to that of the plaintiff, he secured the most solemn attention; every word that he uttered resounded with eloquence through the hall, and the ears of the Peers were rivetted with attention. Had he been content with the effect of this he would have defeated the plaintiff, but he was now determined on complete victory. Gathering all his energies, he hurled with indignation an exposure of the plaintiff's conduct, founded on circumstances that he should have known; many present sympathised to such a degree, in the generosity of his rage, that they started from their seats.

The solicitor chuckled with delight, for the cause was won with triumph and glory; several of the peers came below the bar and sought the personal friendship of the eloquent orator; among others Lord Buyborough, who shook him by the hand, and, renewing their Oxford acquaintanceship, invited him to dine at his mansion on the following Sunday.

THE STOLEN CHILD.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

AT the time appointed, Troven went to Lord Buyborough's mansion to dinner, pleased with the invitation, and with his professional prospects; for his success was marked by the receipt of several briefs—an earnest to himself of a prosperous career.

On approaching the house, he felt himself unaccountably agitated: a glow of surprise, as it were, was excited, and yet he could not explain the obtuse sense of gratification by which he was so affected. The same feeling rose more vividly when he entered the hall, in which, though he had no distinct recollection of having ever been, every object appeared familiar; for in his childhood he was often there; and though he retained no consciousness of the impression which they had made, he yet knew them again.

When he entered the drawing-room, this emotion, to him inexplicable, grew still more vivid;

and as there was nobody in the room, he examined different articles of the furniture and ornaments with awe and curiosity, endeavouring in vain to remember when and where he had seen the things they so dreamily resembled. The likeness, however, seemed so vague, that it never crossed his mind he was amidst old and well-known objects; he only thought that he had seen something like the same apartment before. But his reverie was soon interrupted by the entrance of Lord Buyborough with his lady, the eldest of their cousins, whom he had married. The younger of the two followed, an extremely beautiful and delicate creature, whose surpassing grace and bloom dissolved at once all the imaginings which the local genius had so magically renewed. Several strangers then came in, and the whole party was of that quiet, easy kind, which, without obtrusion, exists only in refined society, where brilliancy of talent is not remarkable, and where the discipline of manners subdues the varieties of character. It was, however, agreeable to the state of Troven at that time; for, from the period of his splendid appearance at the bar of the House of Lords, various accidents had kept him in a state of acute excitement, insomuch, that the equanimity of the company afforded to him repose, even enjoyment. Perhaps a curious metaphysician might say, that this was equally owing to the influence of the tacit objects around, as to the smooth and reciprocal courtesies which prevailed between the members of the family and the guests.

When he withdrew for the evening, in analysing his own feelings as he walked homeward, he could

not but acknowledge to himself that he retained a livelier sentiment towards the accomplished Althea Mordant than he had expected. He regarded the invitation of Lord Buyborough but as an indication on the part of his Lordship to renew their Oxford acquaintance ; and though he felt the distinction as propitious, he had yet obeyed the invitation, more as a matter of that kind, than with any hope of particular pleasure. But he could not afterwards reflect on the incidents of his emotion as less than an era in his life.

The happy feeling which had taken sudden possession of his mind, as he had approached the mansion, and the delight he felt when he entered it, before seeing any of the family, he regarded but as that anticipation of passing a cheerful afternoon, which sometimes a man experiences as a predisposition to find all in unison with himself. But the impression which he had received from the beauty and intelligence of his fair cousin, was more ardent than even that predisposition warranted. In it, the unconscious remembrance which had quickened his emotion was absorbed, and he could only think of her. She was, indeed, one who could not be seen without emotion ; for her exquisite beauty was illuminated from within with a glow of intellectual light. The purity of her mind, and the surprising elegance of her appearance, justified the comparison of her mental and corporeal charms to that of the dew-drop on the rose. To some occult spell in the air, with which she was surrounded, he ascribed the felicity he had enjoyed. There was a predominance in her image, in consequence, which reduced all other

recollections into minor importance; but he considered himself as actuated in this homage by her superiority, and gave the name of admiration to a sentiment that was nearer allied to love.

When he returned to his chambers, he was in a gayer frame of mind than he had almost ever felt, and sat down by his fire with a degree of happiness which he had rarely experienced. He had not, however, been long in this agreeable state of rumination, when Mr. Villiers entered. It was rather late, and his visit produced the greater surprise, as he mentioned, that he had only come from his own chambers.

“What,” cried Troven, “has happened in my absence to break in so upon your accustomed tranquillity?”

“Nothing,” replied Villiers, “nothing: but I consider this visit as auspicious to your future success, and I am interested, perhaps foolishly, to know how it has gone off.”

Troven then told him that he had rarely enjoyed a pleasanter day.

“I was more at home,” said he, “than I can describe;” and then he became eloquent with the praise of Althea Mordant, during which he perceived a cloud, thickening on the visage of Villiers, and it had a hue of sadness in it that attracted his notice. He said —

“Why does all this so affect you? — you look as if it gave you no pleasure.”

“It should, though,” cried the other with energy; “for there is no one in whom I feel so much interest and fear.”

“Fear! Villiers,” exclaimed Troven; “why do

you make use of that expression? Permit me to add, that I have observed for some time that you do not look upon me with your old cordiality."

"In truth, my young friend," replied Villiers, "your situation is never out of my mind; you have all about you that can command honour, esteem, and whatever attaches friends. But what may you yourself be destined to suffer, should the discovery of your birth be different from my hopes."

"It is singular that you should make that remark on this evening," cried Troven; "there must be a cause for it - what have you heard?"

Villiers evaded a direct answer, by saying, that he could hear nothing that would make him change his opinion of one so highly endowed, and possessed of so much worth.

"You shall not escape by that flattery," interrupted Troven. "Come, tell me at once your news, unless it is something very bad: the day's enjoyment has strengthened me to sustain it."

"I have no news," was the reply; "but do you recollect that evening when we expected the woman Tomlins here, and afterwards went to her lodgings; that I was troubled with the thought of the manner in which she had prevaricated in her story?"

"Yes, I remember it too well; it has come often between me and the light, and overshadowed my hopes when they might have been cheerful."

"Then," said Villiers, "since you have remarked the effect, I ought no longer, as your friend, to hesitate in communicating my apprehensions."

“Apprehensions! — apprehensions! — what did she say, and why have I been so long of hearing it?”

“Compose yourself,” cried Villiers; “I have no evidence, but only apprehensions.”

“For God’s sake tell me at once, that I may know why you make use of that frightful word.”

“Then,” said Villiers, “how would you endure to ascertain that your origin was low?”

“I hope that I can withstand that.”

“But how could you withstand, if it were proved that you, and not the poor penitent lad, were the son of Mrs. Tomlins?”

Troven started up with amazement at this; but he presently resumed his seat, and Villiers continued.

CHAPTER II.



IN the course of a short time Villiers, seeing our hero become again master of himself, continued :

“ I have no fear of you, but I have my doubts of human nature. It is easy to say that a high or low condition can make no difference to you now ; that you stand upon your own merits, and by them must stand or fall.”

“ Villiers, you are not so plain as usual — speak out, man. Do you imagine that all this time I have never thought of my origin being base — think better of me, and believe me that ever since the discovery of it has seemed probable, I have feared to think that it might be base. But what cause have you for those apprehensions which you say, and I believe, enter like iron into your soul : and wherefore is it, that on this night, of all that we have passed together, you have thought it right to warn me of this painful possibility ?”

“ I will be explicit with you,” said Villiers, sedately, even with some degree of solemnity in his voice. “ I have no specific cause from the woman Tomlins herself, to believe you were a surreptitious

child, but the idea shot into my mind when I detected her prevaricating, especially when she spoke with indifference of the unfortunate young man that is now abroad, and with solicitude of you ; doubtless it is not inconsistent with the depravity which may corrupt even a feminine heart to care little for her own offspring and sordidly attach herself to one more in a condition to assist. But I am loth to think so ill of any shape that resembles woman, yet this thought troubled me, and the more, when I reflected on the impression it might produce on you."

"But she is dead," said Troven, "it matters not whether her intention was true or but to beguile — she can harm me no more : and she has left no evidence that can do me good or ill. What, however, to night has put this mystery in your mind ? why, more than yesterday, do you think it possible that I may be basely born — has any thing, tell me frankly, occurred in the interval."

"You press me close," cried Villiers, "and I dare no longer equivocate with your questioning."

"Tell me out-right what has happened."

Villiers gave a sigh, and added, pathetically, "I might tell and truly, that nothing new has come to my knowledge ; but there has been, this afternoon, an incident that has wakened my wildest fears. You remember Mrs. Halden — the lady with whose genius you were so interested ?"

"Yes, yes ; what of her — how could I ever forget the singular distress in which she was placed ?"

"I found on my table to night," said Villiers, "when I returned to my chambers, a letter from her, by which she informs me that the relation of

her children, from whom they expected a rich inheritance, is dead, and that she is no longer exposed to a recurrence of that destitution in which we saw her."

"The news," exclaimed Troven, "is good; but in what way does it concern me? If she has another book of poetry, it might, for her writing is like fire, it grows by what it feeds on."

"I am glad," replied Villiers, "to hear you make so merry a remark; but the purport of her letter is striking — she mentions you, and says, that the bearer was the servant of her children's kinsman, who, in consequence of a small annuity left him by his master, goes to London in search of a wife and child, whom he left, many years ago, in consequence of the ignominious courses to which the wife was addicted."

"Did she not mention the bearer's name?" said Troven emphatically."

"Yes, and thereby hangs a tale. Who do you think it was?"

"How should I know? You vex me by these interrogatories."

"Why, Jasper Tomlins!"

"Jasper Tomlins!"

"Aye, the father of the lad that has been, I trust, so rescued."

"Say rather, mine, as you apprehend."

"I have but told you," said Villiers, "my fears; he is the husband of that deplorable combination of grovelling vice and shattered elegance, that we have seen."

"Does Mrs. Halden say so?"

"No: and therein lies the wonder; for I was not

at home when he left the letter ; but in the evening, the old woman, in whose room the outcast died, called, — ”

“ Well, I grow impatient.”

“ And, without much preface, she told me that the man, Jasper Tomlins, had been at her house, and requested that she would inform me of his intention to see me in the morning, and begged to know at what hour he should come.”

“ It is a strange and awful coincidence, as I feel it,” said Troven ; “ how did he go to her ?”

“ That,” said Villiers, “ I never enquired ; he may have known that his wife knew her, and may have gone to her house ; but I was so struck with the incident, that I could find no other reply ready, but only to fix the hour when he should come.”

“ I do not see in all this,” said Troven, “ how it advances my anxious enquiry in any degree.”

“ It does not ; but the old woman’s comment has disturbed me ; it would seem from what she gropingly guesses, that you are the child that the man is in quest of.”

“ How — I !” cried Troven.

“ Of her own accord,” replied Villiers, “ she began to speak of the deceased and of her son, of whom she knew nothing ; but she heard you mentioned, and her conjectures took their bias from that.”

“ Are you not, Villiers,” said our hero, “ in this, yielding to your fancy and your fears over-much ? Your tidings do surprise me ; but I feel no alarm. At what hour did you fix with her for Tomlins to call ?”

“ At nine ; will you be present ?”

“Had you not asked the question, I would have offered — but why does all this, my friend, so molest you? If he be my father, I cannot too soon know him; his master’s annuity speaks for his character, and his long absence from that — I will not think she was my mother — no, Villiers, my heart recoils from the thought; but what you have said gives but a slender warranty for your apprehension.”

“Thoughts,” replied Villiers, “come not of nothing; I would not have imagined you were her son had I not some cause to fear it.”

“You think so shrewdly!” exclaimed Troven. “I see in your tale sufficient to make me inquisitive, nothing that alarms me.”

By this time it was wearing late, and Villiers repeating that he expected to see him at nine next morning, rose to go away, none vexed at the manner in which his communication had been received; but the austerity with which he regarded the workings of human-nature, made him ascribe the latter behaviour of Troven to the manner in which he had so contentedly passed the day. It may be that he had not told all the grounds he had for his suspicion, or not told them sufficiently clearly to inspire him with the fear that he himself suffered; for certainly, there was a degree of passion and ardour sometimes in the enquiries of Troven, becoming his anxiety on the subject; and he said, after wishing him good night, that in the morning he might feel different.

After his departure, Troven, as he sat down by his fire and pondered on the past, became more and more grieved. He could not allow himself for

a moment to think that there was any ground for the strange suspicion with which Villiers was affected. He regarded it as engendered by the harsh interpretation which he put upon the actions of mankind ; but the poison was swallowed, and he could not reason himself out of its effect. Ever and anon when he felt the thing improbable, his fancy returned to the events of the day, and he thought with complacency of Althea Mordant, but it was only to be sensible to sharper pangs.

Whether Villiers did right or wrong in communicating his mortifying apprehension, we shall not determine, but the sting that he had left behind, had all the poignancy of malice. Perhaps a man who thought better of his kind, would have locked the thought in his own bosom till he had stronger evidence ; but we are to recollect that Villiers was, to a certain degree, a misanthropist ; his habits, with all his virtues, made him prone to the sinister pleasure which is often enjoyed by the malignant and the thoughtless, in telling distressing news to those who are deepest interested in the worst result. Be this, however, as it may, sleep that night was scared away from the couch of Troven, and every hour, that the night dragged wearily through, was less and less tinged with the happiness of the day, and grew more and more dismal, dark, and heavy. Nor, when the morning peeped into his room, did its light bring any solace to his joyless anticipations. Ere the sun rose he could think of nothing but of the doom that awaited him, if Villier's fears should prove well founded.

CHAPTER III.

IN the mean time, Jasper Tomlins, the elder, who had been the servant to the relation of Mrs. Halden's children, when he sent the old woman to Mr. Villiers's chambers, went himself to Mrs. Servit's with a letter; on the delivery of which a mutual recognition of each other took place, he having been a groom in a family related to the old lady with whom she had formerly lived as a companion.

He told her the object which had brought him to London, and of his imprudent marriage when a young man, and how the vices of his wife had induced him, soon after the birth of their son, to desert her. He then rehearsed what Mrs. Halden had told him concerning her robbery, and how his unfortunate offspring was rescued from London and ruin by the humanity of Mr. Villiers.

To all this Mrs. Servit listened with a curious kind of sagacity, as if she heard a second version of a tale which she had before known; and, with that Scottish peculiarity which at once is guarded and easy, without saying she knew, she enquired what tidings he had received of his wife.

"She is dead," said he, "and the world is well rid of her; for when I knew her, though she was then much older than me, she was a flower of brimstone."

"Aye," said Mrs. Servit, "then it was a thoughtless marriage; but as it was the means of settling you, ye ought to be thankful that it was ordained to come to pass."

He then told her of the letter which he had from Mrs. Halden to Villiers for the purpose of introducing him to Troven, whose history answered to many points that might have been his son's.

"But," said he, "the old woman in whose house my wife died, says that Villiers himself is more probably my son; for, on her death-bed, my wife sent for him, and that she herself brought him to her bedside, and when he went away, the dying wretch was in the dead throes."

"I'll ne'er deny," replied Mrs. Servit, "that what the woman told may be true, if it was in the course of nature for a young man to be father to an old one; but as that is not the case, I have my doubts on the subject."

"Then," exclaimed Jasper Tomlins, "you are of opinion, with Mrs. Halden, that Troven may be my son?"

"The heavens forbid!" exclaimed Mrs. Servit.

"Ah, mem," said the man, somewhat disconcerted, "I am not now the rantipole that you once knew. Since the day that my wife disgusted me, and I fled from London, I have turned over a new leaf; and the best proof that I can give that my son would have no cause to be ashamed of his father is—for a servitude of nineteen years with my late master, he has left me my wages for life."

"That," said Mrs. Servit, "is, to be sure, something; but Mr. Troven, whom I know very well is a proper brought-up gentleman, and has had the best of educations: he can never be your son, man; he was at the college, and is a most extraordinary lawyer."

"But, for all that, he may be my son; for Mrs. Halden told me that you told her how he was found wandering on the common all in rags."

"True," said Mrs. Servit, "vera true; but did you keep a footman, that was yourself but an under-groom? and did you bring up your family with all their ayes and nays, like Valentine and Orson?"

"Why do you ask that question, mem?"

"Is'nt it," replied she, "a gospel truth? did'nt he wonder what was become of John, the footman, and behave at the table, the first day, like a wee princie? Na, na! you're all off your eggs—Mr. Troven is no get of yours, or my Christian name is not Janet!"

"Well," said Jasper, "I have been on a wrong scent: who is Mr. Troven?"

"Haven't I told you? It's very impudent, and shows the old leaven of your character, to contradict my word, looking in my face."

Poor Tomlins was a little taken aback by this answer; and, with a pacifying humility in his accent, said he did not mean to contradict her, and that it was only a construing of the words which caused the misunderstanding.

"Well, well," said she, "I forgive you, for you were never a particular lad: but do not blow yourself up with the notion that ever Mr. Troven will acknowledge you as his father. Dear me!

the thing's no possible — Mr. Troven is topping in the law, and —”

“But he can't, if he would,” interrupted Tomlins, “deny the fact, if so be I am his father.”

“Miracles will never cease,” said the good lady; “and much is in the power of Providence to do; but I have good reason to know that Mr. Troven is —”

“Mem,” cried Tomlins, “don't harass me with trifling: if the lad Troven be my son, what's the use of denying it?”

“But,” said she, “if he is not, what's the use of acknowledging it?”

After a short pause, he replied, disappointed, and, as it were, helplessly —

“So I have got only my journey to London for my pains. Well—my resolution to bring him well up when I got my independence is all smoke!”

Mrs. Servit was touched a little by the tone and accent in which this was said; and, to soften the misfortune, she added —

“Mrs. Halden is a poetical woman; she does not know the way of the world like her elders, or she would have instructed you better; for, surely, me that brought up Mr. Troven, should know best who he is.”

“Certainly,” said Tomlins, “that's but justice, and all right you should — but who is his father?”

“Not you, take my word for it, Jasper.”

“But if you know,” cried the man, waxing a little impatient, “can't you satisfy a father's appetite?”

“That,” replied the lady, “is a cormorant question, that I did not think you would have had the

composity to ask; and I would give you an answer, of you would tell me what reason you have for putting me so into a corner. No, no, Jasper; I know you of the old, and you must not now expect to bamboozle my discernment."

"Gracious!" exclaimed he; "can I give better proof that I have seen a new light, than*that I have come to London to find my son? and I am met on the threshold by you with a no."

"But you say Mr. Troven is your son."

"I was led to hope he was."

"Oh! that is speaking in moderation. If you had begun in that manner, I would have been very explicit, and given you all manner of satisfaction; but plump you came upon me with—'Mr. Villiers is my son;' and when I told you that he was a much older man, whom I knew perfectly, 'Then,' says you, 'Mr. Troven is my son.' Credit me, Jasper, Mr. Troven is no more your son than I am, who am but an old woman. However, this I will say, that it will give me no small pleasure to hear you have found your son. But, Jasper! Jasper! none of your tricks upon travellers. I am too old a crow to be caught with havres. No, Jasper! your son was ta'en up for a thief, and if it had not been for the skilful handling of Mr. Troven and Mr. Villiers, it might have gone hard with him. But, to make short of a long tale, he was sent by Mr. Villiers to the East Indies; and you will hear all the particulars when you see that gentleman. I see, however, ye're in a state of dolorosity, and would be none the worse of a dram to keep up your spirits."

CHAPTER IV.

IN the morning, Troven went at the hour appointed to Villiers's chambers, and had scarcely seated himself, when Jasper Tomlins, the father, came to the door. The moment he entered, such was the emotion of Troven, that he started up from his chair ; but presently he acquired the masterdom of himself, in consequence of seeing a striking resemblance of some peculiarity that he had observed in the young man who had been sent abroad. It was not so striking, however, as to attract the attention of Villiers, who became grave and apprehensive.

After some short conversation, Villiers mentioned that Mrs. Halden had requested him to make him acquainted with Troven ; and, turning to our hero, immediately added that he was present.

It was in unison with the warm unchecked feelings of Jasper Tomlins to burst into tears at the sight of one whom he believed his son, and about whom he was so anxious. Troven said nothing ; but a slight surprise was visible in his countenance when he saw Tomlins' emotion.

Villiers was affected by the scene, but he changed the current of both their feelings, by saying to Tomlins, that he was apprised of the object for which he had come to London, and added, that the motive did credit to his feelings; but he apprehended that Mrs. Halden had formed a hasty opinion in imagining there was any probability of Troven proving to be his son.

Whether the appearance of Troven had any effect in making Tomlins wish that her conjectures were true, we do not undertake to determine; but with Villiers he excited a mortifying astonishment, when, in answer to what he was saying, he expressed his conviction that Troven was his son. On Troven himself, his words left no impression; for the resemblance to the rescued delinquent, which he had noticed at his entrance, made him comparatively easy, and he said, without agitation,

“What is your reason for thinking so?”

Tomlins then repeated what he had heard of the way in which he was found by Dr. Wycombe, and particularly the anxiety of his wife to see him on her death-bed.

Without changing his manner, Troven replied,

“What you have said would be plausible, if there were not another young man in the case.”

“Yes,” said Tomlins; “but Mrs. Sabine has told me that my wife said nothing of the one you believe was her son; and that, had he been so, it was not natural that a mother should forget, at such a time, her own offspring.”

“Did she believe,” said Troven, “that she was then dying?”

“I should think,” said the father, without no-

ticing the extreme shrewdness of the question, "that she could not but know her own state."

"Much depends upon that," replied Troven.

Villiers, excited by the observation, turned quickly round, and observed,

"If she did not feel that she was dying, you think, Troven, she might still have been guilty of equivocation?"

"Yes, I do; because, unless she had the inward admonition of present death, there was about her a tenacity of purpose which would make her cling to the deception she intended to practise."

"Are you afraid," said Tomlins, "that I am your father?"

"I should do great injustice," replied Troven emphatically, "to my own reason if I said so. The testimony of your master's regard is a proof that you are entitled to respect; and, while there is a doubt upon my origin, I ought to be thankful that one who has been found so worthy, claims me for his child; but this is a serious matter. To you it is of great importance, for there is another living that has always believed you were his parent."

"Would that he were here!" cried Villiers; "we are fishing in troubled waters, and may be long of attaining the truth."

"Do you not," exclaimed Tomlins with a tone of disappointment, "then believe that this gentleman is my son?"

"I can give no answer," said Villiers thoughtfully, "to that question:" and he turned his eyes on Troven, who, noticing the manner in which he looked, said—

“Do you not see some resemblance between this man and the lad abroad?”

Villiers looked at Tomlins steadily for some time, and then said — “No,” in a grave and impressive accent.

Troven added — “You disturb me; for I thought the resemblance at first sight very striking.”

Tomlins hastily, and with some sharpness in his tone, interrupted him.

“I see,” said he, “that you do not wish to own me for your father.”

Troven replied — “What I have said are my true sentiments; and in such a case I ought not to be blamed for being cautious.”

“I beg pardon,” replied Tomlins, with a softening in his voice that was almost contrite, “I ought to have sought for my son before he was grown so old and grand as to be ashamed of me.”

“You mistake,” interposed Villiers; “it has not been proved yet that Mr. Troven is your son — and this is not a time for self-upbraiding. It does credit to your heart that, after so many years, the anxieties of a father have been awakened in it whenever it was in your power to be of any service.”

With this tone of compassion Villiers appeased the mind of poor Tomlins, who would have been glad that his wishes had obtained any confirmation; but, in the very moment he received an inadvertent rebuke, Troven said —

“I hope you do not cling to the desire of having me for your son merely because the other young man was given to disreputable courses. Poor fellow!” he added humanely, “it was his misfortune not to be so happily brought up.”

And turning round to Villiers, he rejoined —

“ I am astonished you do not see the resemblance : to me it is very palpable.”

Villiers looked eagerly again, and, without saying any thing, shook his head.

By this time Tomlins had recovered from the conflicting feelings with which he had been agitated, and said, as he rose to go away, in a characteristic manner —

“ Gentlemen, I hope you will pardon me for troubling you, but I expected to have had more luck :” and, glancing at Troven for a moment, he added, with a tremulous voice, “ God bless you, sir, I wish you well.”

Our hero was deeply affected by this simple expression, and the manner in which it was said. Rising from his seat, he went to the poor man as he was leaving the room, and, taking him by the hand, said kindly and fervently —

“ I thank you — the blessing has come from a father’s heart, though I may have no claim to receive it.”

CHAPTER V.



SEVERAL months passed after the visit of Tomlins to Mr. Villiers, without any incident occurring in the life of our hero, deserving of particular notice.

From his appearance so much to his credit at the bar of the House of Lords, he continued to rise in his profession, but not in so rapid a manner as Villiers had expected. He was, however, advised to go upon the circuit, and he made choice, from motives of economy, of the home district. He also continued, occasionally, his literary pursuits, as a means of adding to his narrow income, which underwent no increase by his professional success, for he still kept it at the same rate, diminishing by his fees the amount of what he received from the warm-hearted Mrs. Servit, whose kindness for him, fortunately, suffered no diminution.

With Lord Buyborough he cultivated the acquaintance until their intimacy ripened into friendship. The rest of the world, who heard of his assiduity, ascribed it to interested if not sordid motives; for they knew not that it was more on ac-

count of the beautiful Althea's company, that he went so often to his Lordship's mansion, than from any thing in that nobleman's power to bestow; who partook of the absence and indolence belonging to the family, and was not likely, from any motive of self-reflection to patronize merit, however much he might have been inclined to do so, where his feelings were excited. But Troven never afterwards, in his visits, experienced the same inexplicable pleasure on entering the house that had so contributed to his enjoyment on the first occasion.

It happened when the time arrived that he should go upon the circuit, that Lord Buyborough had occasion to visit the neighbourhood of the town in which Troven expected to make his first appearance; and, in consequence, his Lordship invited our hero to take a seat with him in his carriage. The incident itself was not important; Lord Buyborough, without thinking much of the effect—but something of that he did think—made the proposal as agreeable to himself. Troven was, however, aware that his consequence would be augmented, and accepted the invitation as an honour which would prove valuable. Both were in the right: it certainly did increase the young lawyer's influence with his brethren, and in the eyes of the court, that he should come with a nobleman, who, from the reputation in the state of his predecessor, enjoyed a consideration which perhaps was above his rank. Nor was it the least deserving of attention that he came in a carriage that should have been his own. We mention this circumstance not for any importance that could be attached to

it; for directly it gave rise to no consequence further than it helped to produce personal augmentation of character, and probably, was the means of bringing a brief or two more into his blue bag than would otherwise have found their way there.

Among other cases there was one in which he took more than common interest : it was that of a prisoner accused of some misdemeanour. The case as all those of humble delinquents, chanced not to be very well drawn up. The brief narrated it loosely enough, but the narration was not very correct in one or two points. Troven perceived the defect, and his curiosity being stimulated by what was set forth, resolved himself to see the culprit ; it should be mentioned why.

In it, to illustrate his character, it was stated, that among other things of an old date, he had come from London with a woman and a child upon the day that Troven had been found on the common by Dr. Wycombe. The date struck Troven when he first looked at the paper ; and the incident of the woman and child was a curious coincidence, as it appeared to him. The date was introduced into the brief, merely to account for the time between two actions of the accused ; but to have fallen in with a woman and a child, on the same day that he had himself been found, appeared deserving of investigation. Accordingly, under the pretext of visiting the prison for the gratification of his curiosity, he went thither ; and, in the course of going over it, requested to speak with his client, to whom he was immediately admitted.

Instead of enquiring as to the merits of the accusation, Troven, cursorily as it were, mentioned

that he was engaged on his defence, and, in the course of conversation, adverted to his travelling from London with a woman and child, asking what sort of person she was.

The man happened to be possessed of a very accurate recollection, and described her appearance with great precision, remarking that he should not have recollected her at all had it not often occurred to him afterwards, that the child was not her own but surreptitiously obtained. In addition to this intelligence, he described the ragged garb of the boy in such a manner, that Troven felt inclined to think that the story concerned himself. He had often seen the rags which Mrs. Servit had preserved, but he had never heard the person who had wandered the child on the common described ; and he could trace very little resemblance between what the boy wore and the clothes preserved ; still his curiosity, to call it by no other name, was increased, and his questions became more particular. All he could obtain, however, from the man was, that he had travelled from the skirts of the town on the same day that he himself was found, and that his companions were of a low condition, of an appearance that bespoke some probability that he himself might have been the child. He then, not to appear too much interested by the incident, spoke with the man relative to the imputation under which he was to be tried ; and, hearing his version of the case, still saw that he must necessarily be acquitted. He, accordingly, requested him, that if he should be, to afterwards wait on him.

In the meantime Troven wrote to Mrs. Servit what he had learned, and begged her to look out

the rags for he would bring with him the man to town.

Matters took the turn that he expected, and he hastily returned with the man to Mrs. Servit; but, on examining the clothes, the man confessed himself at fault, by saying that they might be the same that the child wore, but, seen by themselves, he could trace no resemblance, adding, however, that he recollected the woman saying from what part of the town she had come, and thought that there she might be traced.

“I shall never forget her,” said he, “because, although her dress was mean, she had the air of a gentlewoman, and did not speak that trolloping language which might have been expected from her appearance.”

Troven sighed with disappointment; the description answered to Tomlins' wife, but she was dead. Still, when he reflected on the different circumstances which he had ascertained, he could not but acknowledge to himself that two facts had been acquired, namely, in the man he had obtained evidence to prove that a woman, who resembled Mrs. Tomlins, with a child, whom there was reason to think was not her own, had been seen within a few miles of where he had been found on the same day, and that she had come from a particular quarter of the town.

CHAPTER VI.

VILLIERS, in the mean time, continued in his ill-humour; for he could not make himself understand why one, in whom he found so many amiable qualities, should stand in the peril of so great a misfortune, as he deemed it, of having base and coarse persons for his parents. His suspicion, it is true, was shaken from the time of his first interview with Jasper Tomlins; and his fear in that quarter was, perhaps, a little changed: but his morbid sensibility gave credence to apprehension, and, although he thought it might be doubtful if Tomlins was the father, he grew more afraid that some other less worthy might be discovered.

This, doubtless, was owing to a constitutional peculiarity which made the pressure of every unhappy circumstance more painful to him than to the commonality of mankind. There was, in consequence, something of a desire to appease his discontent in the visit which Troven paid after the examination of the man at Mrs. Servit's.

When our hero had related the story, and showed how it dove-tailed in with other circumstances

which they had carefully discussed together, he, as he often did when perplexed, remained for some time without speaking, and, when he did, what he said partook of the mysticism to which he was naturally prone.

“ I acknowledge,” said he, “ that this new incident connected with the history of the man, is very striking, and is the more worthy of credit that it is so improbable, my young friend ; such a remarkable coincidence of circumstances all tending to draw, if I may say so, the lines of circumvallation closer, proves that within them lies all that you desire to be possessed of : but what is the result of your enquiries about the woman he described ?—it can be no other than the wife of Tomlins.

“ I have not yet,” replied Troven, “ made any search for her, believing that she was no other than the deceased ; but I have come to ask you to assist me in the discovery.”

Villiers made no reply ; he instantly started up and took his hat, requesting his friend to follow.

When they were about half way down the stairs, he said, with vacation in his voice—

“ You are too remiss ; you ought instantly to have ascertained a fact so important to yourself.”

“ Truly,” answered Troven ; “ the question does not seem to affect me so much as it does you. All I care for now is to find parents, reputable and honest people.”

“ But,” said Villiers, “ as things tend that may not be.”

“ I wish you would not bode so of evil,” cried

Troven gaily ; “ why do you fear they may not be what I hope they are ? ”

“ Experience,” replied Villiers, “ has taught me that fear is more of a truth teller than hope.”

By this time they had reached the court, and Villiers relapsed into what may be called his brittle taciturnity, and he made no remark ; indeed never spoke till they had reached the mean and populous neighbourhood where old Mrs. Sabine lived, and her mysterious lodger died.

“ It is not the least wonderful thing in your story,” said Villiers, “ that so many accidentally concerned in it should know one another. This is the quarter where Mrs. Tomlins had taken up her abode : ” and, in saying these words, he led our hero to the dark, ill-aired nook, in which the habitation of Mrs. Sabine was situated.

Without preface he ascended to her apartment, and entered it at once.

The old woman was within, and there was light enough to see she had been sitting on her bed-side alone, and in tears, which the abruptness of his entrance, followed by Troven, prevented her from concealing ; but she had address to say, as she wiped her eyes, that gentlemen should not come into a lady’s chamber without knocking. “ I have been,” she added, with affected cheerfulness, the more touching because it was affected, “ taking my usual supper, and you have disturbed me.”

In saying these words she requested the gentlemen to be seated, and with an air of good breeding that was foreign to the appearance of the room, made something like an apology for its meanness.

Both Villiers and Troven were much surprised at her demeanour ; they had noticed before that she dressed very neatly, though her apparel was uncommonly mean, and that there was something in her manners which showed she had been accustomed to better circumstances.

Villiers was the first of the two who broke silence, and it was with his usual abruptness ; but there was a softness in the inflection of his voice that took away even the appearance of rudeness.

“ I see,” said he, in allusion to what she called supper, “ that your meal has been but of salt water, with a seasoning of sighs.”

“ You say true,” was her answer ; “ but I deserve no better ; my days when I was young were bright, and I was foolish ; grief for my error did not teach me to repent, and now, when I am too old, a thing despised, I feel all the effects thickening around me.”

Villiers, with gentle accent, endeavoured to soothe her ; and, as if it could carry any comfort, he exhorted her to return to her friends.

“ Friends !” she exclaimed, “ I know not now that there is one alive who knew me in my happier time. I am seventy-seven years of age ; for it has pleased Providence to prolong my worthless life even to that period, and it is almost three-score years since I deserted my family ; ask no more, but tell me to what circumstance I owe this visit.”

Troven then recapitulated his story, and what the man had informed him respecting the woman and the child, requesting her to inform him if she could throw any light upon the subject.

“ No,” was the reply ; “ I can give you no in-

formation : for Mrs. Tomlins was but a recent acquaintance ; she was much indisposed when I fell in with her, and she seemed, like myself, to have seen better days. I invited her to take up her abode with me, and here her malady increased — you know the result.”

“ But how came her husband to find you out,” cried Villiers.

“ In truth I cannot answer that : he came to this quarter in quest of lodgings, and we chanced to meet. Some conversation ensued ; and in him I discovered the husband of my deceased guest. — I need not tell you that she was an ill-fated gentlewoman.”

“ It is very extraordinary,” said Villiers to Troven, “ that there should be, in so short a time, such a confluence of chances in your fortunes.”

“ Perhaps,” interposed Mrs. Sabine, “ were you to direct your enquiries to the public-house at the bottom of this lane, you might hear something more ; for, previous to her illness, Mrs. Tomlins went too often there.” And, with something like a consciousness of superiority, Mrs. Sabine added, that she never frequented such places.

Soon after the gentlemen bade her good night, and went to pursue their enquiries at the low public-house to which she had directed them ; but, as they approached it, they lingered with diffidence in the street, for a mingled noise of brawls and coarse singing rose from within, and, when the singing ceased, a vehement torrent of abuse broke from a female voice. They paused at her maledictions, and, with one accord, turned round, resolving to call next morning, when the lewd tur-

bulence would probably be abated — for they were deterred, by the riotous clamour within, from entering. Before, however, they had moved from the spot, part of the inmates came staggering to the door, and among them an odious female, with dishevelled locks, and her bosom unkerchiefed. On seeing Villiers, this bloated hag ran towards him, and, clasping him in her worse than Laocoon embraces, pulled him towards the door, and insisted that he should give her a treat of gin. Troven, shuddering with horror, retreated to a considerable distance, and waited for his friend till he could relieve himself from the loathsome carresses of this human Sin.

Some may think that he ought to have followed his friend, and so he presently thought himself : but the fray was almost instantaneously over : he had only given way to the first impulses of aversion.

Villiers, seeing the situation into which he was dragged, affected an indifference to it far from his nature, for he was a delicate, morose, and irritable man ; but his knowledge of the world had long corrected any weakness into which these elements were apt to betray him. Accordingly, he put on a smile at the way he was beset, and treated the drunken slattern as she required. By this means he won more respect from her associates than he had expected ; and, telling them he had business of importance to transact with the landlord, they left the house as they had originally intended. Troven, hearing the noise subside, rejoined his friend in unmolested safety and tranquillity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE enquiries of Troven and Villiers at the public-house were unsatisfactory. Mrs. Tomlins was known there, but only for two or three of her latter years ; what she had been, and where she had come from, were alike unknown ; and the search was rendered more difficult by a change of landlords in the mean time.

Dismayed by an occurrence so contrary to their expectation, induced both gentlemen to resolve, as they walked back to the Temple, to suspend all further investigation till young Jasper returned from India, as he was then hourly expected. They had, indeed, no other alternative at that time, and it occurred to them both at once, that he would be able to conduct them over the obstacles with which they felt themselves environed — perhaps even recollect something of the era in which the substitution of the children was supposed to have been made.

As it was yet early in the evening when they returned home, Villiers went with Troven to his chambers. It was dusky when they entered ; and

not observing that a letter was on the table, Villiers laid his hat upon it, and sat down by the fireside, evidently thoughtful, for candles were soon lighted, and by them his countenance was particularly disclosed. Troven, who observed how much he was troubled, made more light of their fruitless visit than probably he felt; but he then considered it unavailing to express vain regrets, and, in consequence, affected to be in better spirits than he really was.

“ I am surprised,” said Villiers, observing his hilarity, “ that you can be so cheerful, while you are so disappointed.”

“ There you are in error,” replied Troven; “ I am not disappointed. It does not much disturb the habitude of my nature to find such a search ineffectual. I am used to wonder who my parents can be; and the business of this evening is in unison with that of all the days and nights that I recollect any thing of. But why should you be so downcast; you are more like a foundling than I am.”

Villiers, partly to conceal the deep perturbation with which he was moved, feigned more weakness than belonged to one who had been disciplined by adversity, and pretended that he had all day been oppressed in an unaccountable manner, by a dream that hung heavily on his spirits, adding —

“ I am no believer in visionary omens; but this I imagine, is the creature of some disease. It has deepened upon me so much, really I am not myself when I think of it; and yet I scarcely recollect in what phantoms it appeared.”

“ Come, come,” said Troven, “ realities, more

than the unsubstantial seeming of things, perplex you ; but if dreams have any efficacy, I should be at this moment very sad ; for I, too, have had a metaphysical visitation ; but it scared my sleep, and instead of being lugubrious like you, I have been more cheerful than my usual, and yet it was a very grim apocalypse. I witnessed so much, that it haunted me as perseveringly as a conscience-born ghost : but I got rid of it by tripping up the spectre's heels in making it hitch into rhyme. As the laundress will soon be here to set the tea-things, before she comes I will treat you with a recital of my poem."

"Do," said Villiers ; " I am in the humour to-night for listening to dismal tales, and your's especially ; as it is in verse it may happen to drive the memory of my own lurid revelation away."

"Then listen," cried Troven ; and drawing his portfolio, which was lying on the table, towards him, he read from a bit of paper in it the following composition —

THE END.

Strange fancies will at times molest,
Awake, or when asleep ;
And did I dream a dream last night,
Or did I think to weep ?

Methought the green and grassy earth
Was as a mort-cloth black,
And all the sable skies above
Were streaked with flaming wrack.

The sun shone like a coffin-plate,
That tells who lies below ;
The stars all bright were as the nails
That glitter in a row.

The trees in that unrighteous scene
Were as the hearse-plumes dread ;
The streams ran ink, their falls were mute,
And all the world was dead.

Then one by one the lights expired,
And ancient night was come ;
Lone silence settled dark o'er all,
Yes — sound itself was dumb.

The glimmering phantoms of the past
Seemed things that were to be ;
And like the stars my thoughts were quenched ;
And light was gloom to me.

The stedfast earth beneath my tread,
Dissolving passed away,
And through the vague, and void, and vast,
I wandered wild astray.

Time was—a point dimensionless,
Existence ceased — a sigh ;
In all the rimless space around,
God was alone and I.

“ Well, Villiers,” continued Troven, “ what think you of my cogitation ?” observing that he still remained moody. For about the space of a minute he made no answer, and when he did, it was with a melancholy smile somewhat derisive.

"Troven," said he, "though I am neither a Joseph nor a Daniel, I can interpret your dream."

"Then do;" said the other, "and make an effort to chase away the blue devils that so annoy you — what does it signify?"

"Nothing," said Villiers, gravely, "it is all cursed nonsense. I wonder how you could ever imagine that the jingling of rhymes could conceal absurdity."

"Now," replied Troven, gaily, "you speak like yourself: upon my word I do think the idea possesses originality, and the verses are exceedingly simple."

"You may think so," said Villiers, "but my opinion is as unchangeable as the character of the air or the ocean. I hate poetry, or rather, I hate fine words set into rhythm, for they do not speak to the reason; and, save when they do that, all poetry is to me mere verbiage."

"So you have many times said, Villiers, and there are cases in which I may agree with you; but there is something musical or melodious in that arrangement of words in which poetry so essentially differs from prose."

"We may resume the argument after tea," cried Villiers, a little more briskly, "for here comes the laundress with the tea-things."

In saying these words he lifted his hat to make room for the tray, and in doing so the letter beneath was seen."

"Ah!" said Troven, "what's this?" and he drew it towards him. Observing the hand-writing on the superscription, with Buyborough in the corner, he opened it, saying as he did so,

“Some invitation I suppose ;” and he began to read it to himself, but scarcely could he have perused three or four words when he started, and then continued the perusal. It was a short letter, but at the conclusion he put it into his pocket, and said to Villiers,

“I must leave you as soon as possible. Lord Buyborough requests to see me on some demi-professional business he calls it, and begs me to come immediately whatever the hour may be on this side midnight.”

“Go, then, at once ;” said Villiers, “think nothing of me — every thing should give way to business, for we know not what may ensue.”

Troven desired his friend to remain where he was, as tea was made, and hastened out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Troven arrived at Buyborough-house, he was shown at once into the library, where his lordship was alone, with a large pile of old papers before him, which he was evidently examining. On seeing our hero enter, he met him in a particular manner, shook him cordially by the hand, saying, that he could not conceive the favour he had conferred by coming at once to him. Before Troven could make any reply, his lordship added, as he placed him in one of the easy chairs by the fire,

“It is a strange business ; but in all my papers that I have yet perused, I have not met with one word calculated to throw any light on the subject.”

“What subject ?” inquired Troven.

“You may, indeed, well ask,” said his lordship ; “were you to guess till doomsday, you would not reach it—but I will tell you.”

Troven, without speaking, bowed.

“Did you ever hear,” cried Lord Buyborough, “of my elder brother ?”

“No,” replied Troven ; “he died young.”

“Ah,” replied his lordship, “so I heard.”

“ Well ?” cried Troven, eagerly.

“ Moderate your zeal till you hear all. I have been looking over all the family papers of about the time when the event was supposed to have taken place.”

“ Supposed ?” cried Troven, in great astonishment.

“ Aye, supposed,” said his lordship : “ but my old steward has heard something from Mr. Mordant, who is heir to the estates, following me and the two ladies, if we die without issue, which has greatly alarmed him.”

“ Indeed !” said Troven, all eye and ear ; “ what has he heard ?”

“ I must leave you,” said his lordship, “ to hear the story from himself : he will be here presently ; but the news has thrown me into a great flurry, and the ladies are wringing their hands, and making a terrible ado.”

Troven, who was much in the practice of telling his own story openly, in the hope of getting some clue that would lead him to his parents, had, however, never mentioned it in the presence of Lord Buyborough, who, having no suspicion that his birth was unknown, sent for him to hold a confidential consultation personally, before applying to his own particular lawyer ; but, notwithstanding this, his lordship was amazed at the impression which the rumour seemed to make on him, and added,

“ Isn’t it a strange matter ?”

“ What is ?” cried our hero, in a kind of stupor.

“ Why, he says that Mr. Mordant had said it was never known what became of my elder brother.”

“What then?”

“Why,” replied his lordship, “if that is the case, you know I cannot be Lord Buyborough, nor entitled to the estates of which I have possession. You will say, that until my brother is found, or proved to have died, I have the legal right;—yes, to the estates, but none to the title. You seem greatly astonished at all this.”

Just at this moment a knocking was heard at the door.

“It is Mr. Piccroft, the steward,” said his lordship; and he requested him, aloud, to come in.

On his entrance, Lord Buyborough introduced our hero with something more expressive in his manner than the ceremony required; and his lordship begged Mr. Piccroft to take a seat near Troven, adding—

“I have been telling him the singular news you heard from Mr. Mordant: have the goodness to make Mr. Troven, as well as you can, acquainted with it; for as the ladies have been much startled with the tale, I must go to them for a short time—not that I am myself much agitated with the thought of possibly finding a brother, but you know it will be a shocking thing, if Lady Buyborough is obliged to sink into plain Mrs. Mordant.”

And turning round to Troven, his lordship said, very seriously—

“If the tale have any foundation, I will instantly abstain from using the title and privileges of a peer.”

Troven, although in a flurried state of excitement, had yet composure enough to reply—

“In such a case, my lord, it is necessary to be cautious : let us keep the business as much as possible out of the tongues of the world. Your uncle having died a bachelor, never sought any augmentation to his rank. In this crisis, your lordship should avail yourself of his services, and ask a more advanced title.”

“I have thought of that,” said his lordship, “and we will speak of it anon : in the meantime, excuse me for leaving you with Mr. Piccroft.”

He then quitted the room, and the old man, somewhat abruptly, began his story with many expressions of astonishment and regret, for he was rather tedious in his phrases, and disposed to more circumlocution than is commonly met with among those who have the reputation of being adroit in business ; but Troven interrupted his prefatory remarks, by inquiring what Mr. Mordant said.

“You see, sir,” replied Mr. Piccroft, “passing my lord and lady, and Miss Mordant, he is heir to the title and estates. I do not know how it has happened that my lord is not cordial with him, but people of quality don’t like any heirs except those of their own body : however, my lord is not intimate with him, but it may be Mr. Mordant’s fault.”

“True, true,” cried Troven, impatiently ; “we can discuss that hereafter : but what did he tell you ?”

“Why, I can’t say,” said the old man, sedately ; “I don’t know that he told me all he knew ; but what he did tell was very alarming, and made me resolve to inform his lordship forthwith ; so I came to London outright, and saw my lord immediately after my arrival.”

"But," cried Troven, "it is not that which I want to hear of; it is what you heard from Mr. Mordant."

"That is the very point," said the old man, "I am coming to; for his lordship, when I told him the story, made light of it, and said he never heard of it."

"The story! the story!" exclaimed Troven.

"Indeed," added Mr. Piccroft, without being in the least molested by his impatience, "it would be a very extraordinary thing if a man lost a brother older than himself, and not to know of it."

"Gracious!" cried Troven, becoming vexed at his inconclusive narrative, "how lose a brother?"

"That is just what I said to Mr. Mordant — my very words."

"I beseech you," said our hero, "to be more concise; tell me in what way his brother was stolen?"

"Nay," replied the old man, "he did not say the child was stolen, or whether it wandered of its own accord — for that makes a great difference."

"But how was it lost?"

"Of that he said nothing, but that it was lost, and that my lord, until it was ascertained his brother was dead, should not assume the title; and I believe it is on that point his lordship desires to consult you."

"This is insufferable," cried Troven, starting from his seat, and pressing his forehead with his hand; but this extreme agitation was only for a moment. He turned towards Mr. Piccroft, and said —

"I shall never understand this matter until you

tell me exactly what Mr. Mordant said : give me his words, as near as you can recollect."

"Oh," said the old man ; "is that all you wish to know ? it is a short story, but my lord said I was to tell you every particular, and, in consequence, I was afraid of not being particular enough."

Troven reseated himself ; and, seeing there was no way of getting rid of the old man's unnecessary talk, restrained himself, and, with a wave of the hand, expressive almost of despair, bade him proceed.

CHAPTER IX.

“MR. MORDANT,” said the old man, “told me, that about the time my lord’s mother died, there came a rumour, that it was in consequence of her grief for the loss of her child. By what means it was taken away never was discovered, as immediately following her decease, the death of his father, who was a clever but not a particular man, took place.”

Troven could make out nothing from this story ; it bore no resemblance to what he had heard of his own, but he inquired what Mr. Mordant meant by the loss of a child ?

“Oh,” said Mr. Piccroft, “he meant that the child had gone astray, and he had heard that the barrister had two sons, but it appeared he left only one.”

“Very well,” said Troven, “what reason has he for thinking that there were two, and that one of them is unaccounted for ?”

“He has,” said the old man, “a great stake in the question, and has ascertained that my lord’s father undoubtedly had two sons born to him : one

is, and one is not : and moreover he has ascertained, as he told me himself, that the elder is the missing one, for no record of his death or funeral can be obtained. All the servants of the barrister were dispersed at that gentleman's death ; and, in short, it is a ravelled skein, and bodes no good to my lord."

While Mr. Piccroft was speaking, it occurred to Troven that he ought not to mention his own extraordinary case, but to investigate carefully all the evidence that Lord Buyborough could obtain to illustrate his. He observed, however, that the whole story was very improbable, and that the truth lay in a nutshell.

"His lordship," said he, "has only to procure, if possible, one of the servants who was in his father's household at the time of his death : by his or her testimony, the fact that Mr. Mordant so builds upon will be determined :—and," he added, "so his idea is, that the eldest born, the senior of my lord, may be yet alive?"

"Just so," replied Mr. Piccroft ; "and what, in your opinion, should be done?"

Before an answer could be given, his lordship returned into the library, and said, on entering,

"Well, Mr. Troven, what think you of Piccroft's tale of wonder?"

"It is something extraordinary, but it may be soon settled."

"Then," said his lordship, "you do not consider it quite so seriously as I do?"

"Your lordship does me some injustice. I think it a very grave matter ; but the first thing to be done is, to have it well ascertained that there is

any truth in what Mr. Mordant alleges ; for his story, your lordship will remark, is very improbable. Even granting the suddenness of your father's and mother's death, and the dispersion of the household, it is not consistent with probability that such a strange forgetfulness of your brother should infect all concerned. The first thing to be done is to find out one of the servants who was in your father's house when the event took place."

Without making answer to Troven, his lordship begged Mr. Piccroft to leave them alone, but be in readiness to attend him, if required.

The old man immediately left the apartment, and his lordship said,

" Well, what do you thing of my situation ?"

" It is perplexing — I know not what to think ; but I will candidly advise you to apply, in the first instance, for an addition to your rank ; so that, if the worst in the chapter of accidents should turn up, you may be secured from the tongues of the vulgar."

" As I have told you," said his lordship, " I have already thought of that ; but would it not be prudent to ascertain first if there is any truth in what Mr. Mordant believes ?"

" No," said Troven ; " if you do that, you expose yourself to the imputation of a fraud. No : I advise you to lose no time in procuring a fresh peerage ; when that is done — when Lady Buyborough is secure of her title, we shall then know how to proceed."

Agreeably to this advice, his lordship lost no time in making application for an advance in the peerage ; and, as his uncle had made no claim for

himself, it was readily acceded to by the minister and the king.

Immediately on the advancement of Lord Buyborough to be a viscount, Troven took up the investigation with the earnestness of an honest man in a great trust, and the fervour of one deeply interested. On the day subsequent to the gazetting of Lord Buyborough's new honours, an advertisement was inserted in the newspapers, offering a reward for one or all of the servants who had been in the service of Mr. Mordant the barrister. A few friends noticed the coincidence of the new peerage and the advertisement; but the latter was so carefully worded that it afforded no excitement to curiosity, and the affair was, in consequence, soon forgotten, even by those who had observed it.

For some time no reply was made to the request in the newspaper; but an old woman from the country applied at the shop to where the reference was given, and, without any particular enquiry, she was sent to Troven's chambers.

When she arrived there, he was sitting with Mr. Villiers, who had mentioned to him that young Jasper Tomlins had returned from India, and that he had sent for him to call at his chambers as soon as possible.

"Now," said Villiers, "we are going again to have your affair thick upon our hands; for I have remarked, as a curious ordination of fortune, that any event which bears on it is never sent singly."

At that moment the old woman knocked at the door and told her errand, namely, that she had come to town in consequence of hearing the old

servants of Mr. Mordant the barrister being advertised for.

Villiers and Troven looked at each other and smiled ; — it was so striking an illustration of what the former had been just stating. However, Troven requested the woman to walk in and take a seat, as he had a few questions to ask, for the trouble of answering which she should be well rewarded.

Villiers said nothing ; and the stranger, taking a seat, appeared somewhat surprised at her situation, but had evidently something to say. Her appearance, indeed, without being singular, showed that she had come from the country and was respectable.

She wore a black silk bonnet above a clean and neatly plaited mob cap, a Barcelona handkerchief pinned close to her neck ; black mittins, we believe they are called, on her arms, but her hands were bare ; a checked apron, with a crimson stuff gown, and a green petticoat ; and she wore black stockings, with silver buckles in her shoes.

A person of this description was not often met with in London ; but, at the time in which these occurrences took place, was common in England, and particularly in the northern parts of the kingdom.

“ Were you one,” said Troven, “ of the late Mr. Mordant’s servants at the time he died ? ”

Instead of giving a direct answer to this question, she evinced considerable emotion, and said —

“ Ah, well-a-day, sir, it was a sad house — two deaths within so short a time of each other ! ”

“ Answer me distinctly : were you, then, one of the servants ? ”

“ Yes, sir, I was cook ; and, immediately after his death, went to my friends in the country, where I have ever since lived.”

“ I don’t wish to hear you story,” said Troven : “ but tell me, have you any recollection of his two sons ?”

“ Ah,” said she, “ I shall never forget ; it was the loss of the eldest that caused my poor mistress’s death.”

“ The loss ! what do you mean by that ?”

“ Yes, sir, he was stolen away — it was thought by gypsies ; and, not being found, my mistress, who was very ill, died that day, of all days in the year — on Lady-day.”

“ It was thought, then, that the child was stolen ?”

“ It was never doubted, but I never heard rightly whether he was found again or no ; but when I went to my friends he was still missing.”

Troven and Villiers exchanged looks but no words ; and Troven then took down the address of the woman ; and, bidding her call next morning, she, with something of disappointment in her look, went away ; but he instantly followed her, and enquired if she was sure it was on Lady-day.

She repeated what she had said ; but Villiers suddenly called after her to enquire the names of the other servants and where they could be found, which brought her back into the room.

CHAPTER X.

VILLIERS had remarked the pregnancy of the old woman's countenance, and when she returned into the room, before Troven had time to renew his interrogatives, he observed, that she seemed to have more to say, and he requested her to tell them all she knew. To this she replied, that she had been advised only to answer the questions which were put to her.

"That," said Villiers, "would be very proper in a public court, but this is entirely private, so speak out, that we may see whether you can be of any use to us."

Troven, thinking the manner of Villiers rather hard and peremptory, said with more affability :

"We wish to ascertain the state of Mr. Mor-dant's family at the time of his death, and will be obliged to you for any information you can give us, particularly the names, and, if possible, the places where the other servants may be found."

The urbanity with which this was said, produced an immediate effect on Mrs. Collop, who, shaking off the evident restraint that was upon her, be-

came loquaciously communicative; but added, that "from the time she went into the North she had ceased to have any intercourse with the other servants."

In her communication she evinced more intelligence than the primness of her appearance indicated, and Troven said to her:

"What you have stated is perfectly satisfactory; but we do not wish to know so much of Mr. Mordant's affairs as something respecting the child stolen."

"On that head," said the old woman, "I am but a lame help; all I know is, that he was not found when I left."

"But do you recollect his dress?"

"Oh, yes;" replied she, "it was, I remember perfectly well, of green and black spotted cloth, and made in a fanciful fashion—I never saw a child so dressed before, and I should have known him among a thousand."

Troven, looking at Villiers, replied,

"No doubt he would be soon stript and other clothes substituted?"

"That was what we thought at the time, for the servants, notwithstanding the bustle in the family, occasioned by the death of Mrs. Mordant, were all wild about the boy."

"Would you know the dress again if you saw it?"

"It is a long time ago, but it was very particular, as I have said. I might, however, bogle, if I saw the same, but I can tell what was not it."

"You are sure, however," said Troven, "that the child was never found?"

"I did not say exactly that," was the answer ; "only that he was not found so long as I remained with the family, which was only till after master's funeral."

Troven looked with a brighter countenance at Villiers : it was as if hope shone in it, and Villiers also seemed to relax from that austerity, the habitual character of his physiognomy.

"Then," said Troven to Mrs. Collop, "you cannot give us more information respecting the child : did you never hear he was recovered?"

"I am not sure," said she, "that I ever did, but I believe he was, because I never heard anything of the matter."

Troven then said that he would send for her again, and requested her to make no change in her lodgings."

When she had retired, he appeared a little perplexed and observed to Villiers, that she had not greatly added to their knowledge.

"But she has added to it," was the reply ; "we have ascertained that Lord Buyborough's eldest brother was stolen ; whether he was afterwards found has not been ascertained. We creep it is true, but we progress ; nor are the colour and fashion of the boy's clothes circumstances unimportant."

While they were thus in a desultory manner talking of what had been gleaned from the old woman, forgetting entirely Lord Buyborough's case, and talking only of Troven's, as if in confirmation of Villiers' previous remark, young Jasper Tomlins, in a sailor's dress, came to the door ; he had been before at Mr. Villiers' chambers, and not

finding him within, came to Troven's, towards whom he cherished a feeling of gratitude also.

He was instantly recognised by the two gentlemen and invited in; the smile which Troven glanced towards Villiers at his appearance, had something of surprise in it, resembling the look which he gave him when Mrs. Collop announced herself.

Whether there was anything intentional in Villiers' manner towards the lad, or that he was actuated by the impulse of the moment, we are not sharp-sighted enough to know; but, giving a significant look to Troven, he addressed himself to the young man respecting the voyage to India, and hoped that he found the life of a sailor, with all its hardships, preferable to the dissolute and dangerous courses which he had been persuaded to abandon.

With that ingenuousness which had attracted the attention of Villiers at the first, he warmly expressed his gratitude for his rescue; and, as he was a mild and good-looking young man, the tone in which he expressed himself was highly prepossessing.

Villiers then told him of his mother's death, and was not a little astonished when Jasper said he had heard it.

"How was that?" said Villiers, "you have only arrived this morning, and I understand it was in new lodgings your mother died."

"True, sir; but before I came here I went to where she lived, and there I heard of the removal to Mrs. Sabine, and of her death."

His voice trembled a little in the last expression,

and there was a momentary pause, but it was soon interrupted by Villiers saying —

“It was natural and good-hearted of you to go to your mother first. Had you resided long in the house, you went to before going abroad?”

“About a year,” said Jasper.

“Where did you live before that?”

“In another part of the town — we had always lived there, as long as I could remember and before. In truth, sir, I believe it was for no good reason we ever moved.”

“Do you recollect, interposed Troven, “your father, or anything of your childhood?”

“No,” said Jasper, “no; my father had deserted mother before I can remember. Yet, sir, she was not all bad — sometimes I have seen her very sorrowful for the life she led, and I don’t think the poor woman hated me so much as she seemed to do, when I was reluctant to be so bad as she wished. It was a wild way she had, and when she saw me inclined to better courses, I have seen her sometimes shed bitter tears at my upbraiding as she then called it. Ah, sir, she was more vexed than angry with me.”

“Do you know,” said Troven, “the origin of your mother?”

“No, sir;” replied Jasper, pensively, “but the neighbours said that she came of gentlefolks; sir, there was more of madness than wickedness about her.”

“Your father,” said Troven, “who was he?”

“I don’t know, Sir; I have no recollection of him — I never heard what became of him sir; poor people have too many cares of their own to

know a great deal of what becomes of one another."

"Then you do not know if your father be alive?"

"No, sir; I am afraid to enquire."

"The feeling does you credit," said Villiers. "I, however, am glad to tell you that he is living and doing well."

"Does he know anything of me?" said the young man. "I should be glad to see him;" and, unable to control his feelings any longer, burst into tears, saying, "it is, sir, a blessed thing, which you can never be so unhappy as to know, to think that there is somebody in the world that cares for you."

The tone and manner with which this was said, was deeply affecting; and Troven, to conceal how much it touched him, was obliged to turn round and walk towards the window to hide his emotion.

CHAPTER XI.

THE result of the conversation with Jasper was an agreement on the part of Troven and Villiers, that he should accompany them in the afternoon to the house where he resided with his mother in the time of his youth ; for they ascertained that he himself could give them no precise information that tended in any degree to elucidate their enquiry. In the mean time, Troven went to Mrs. Servit's, to tell her all that had passed ; for matters had now taken such a turn, as completely justified him. Before the discovery of what had been ascertained from Mrs. Collop, he felt that it would have been something equivalent to a breach of professional confidence to have disclosed any particular of Lord Buyborough's case ; but now, towards one to whom he was so much indebted, he no longer felt himself restrained.

While he was relating to her the story, she listened with the most profound attention. Contrary to her usual custom, she never interrupted him ; but as he proceeded, her face brightened,

and when he had told the whole particulars, it sparkled into a cheerful smile.

"Aye, aye," said she, "ye see how my words of truth come to pass: I always said ye were come of somebody, and so it kithes; but I never expected to live to see that you ought to be a Lord."

"Well," said Troven, gaily, "I was always of the contrary opinion; for I thought myself exceeding well qualified to be a personage of that degree."

"No doubt," said she, "ye might think so, having the nature of one in you; but I, who had only my eyes to guess by your externals—it was a very wonderful thing to think always as I did; I had no notion that my sagacity was of such discernment."

"Why," said Troven, "you speak as if the case were settled."

"I have no doubt of it," replied she; "it's very near being so; it just wants a few particulars to be a plain matter of fact."

"Aye; but these particulars, Mrs. Servit."

"I would'nt be particular about them," said she; "you are in my persuasion no other than my lord's brother: that I prophecy; and lo and behold it will be brought about. But I may now tell you, for it will not greatly molest you to know, that Jasper Tomlins has been here again this morning, telling me that his neer-do-weel son has come from Indy, and that he is sure he can be no son of his; but I told him, that as the old cock crows the young cock learns; and that there could not be a surer proof of the young hempy being his get, than that he had been a thief; for that I knew

well how he himself was little better in the days of his youth ; but for all that, he was none converted, continuing to say, you were his son, which to me was most provoking to hear, that brought you up."

" Yes," said Troven : " to him who has taken such an idea into his head, it must be very mortifying to hear what you have said ; but if it should turn out true that I am his son ——"

This was said very playfully ; for in her momentary exultation, Mrs. Servit was disposed to overleap many impediments, and Troven was often inclined to trifle with her when he observed her in such a mood.

" No possible," said she ; " you might as soon tell me that a hooded crow would bring forth a turtle dove, as that you were his son. Have'nt I an eye that can see the difference ? have I not an understanding that can make it manifest ? No, no, Mr. Edward, you are not his son, but a man of pedigree."

" Jasper Tomlins is not," said Troven, a little more gravely, " a man that should be so lightly spoken of."

" True, true," said Mrs. Servit ; " but I have always my doubts of your penitent and contrite ones. Do you think I have forgotten what a mischief he was when I first kent him ? and you know what is bred in the bone is not easily got out of the flesh. It does very well for sic like to keep themselves out of the causeway talk ; but it will be long to the day before a rogue suspects himself of not being a rascal."

" But," said Troven, " I never heard you say much ill of him."

“ Did you ever hear me say any good ? No, no. At one time of his life, if ever a man was ordained to be hanged, he was that man. What with cutting the tails and ears of whelps, there was not such a cruel monster in the land of the living ; he was, to my certain knowledge, a perfect Blue Beard, for drowning whelps and kitlings ; for the latter, to be sure, he might claim a pardon ; for if we did not drown them we would be overrun with cats, who are as bad as mice and rattons, if you give them too much head-rope.”

But not to prolong unnecessarily the conversation with Mrs. Servit, we must say that she all along was perfectly persuaded that Troven would ultimately be found a person of rank ; and to do her justice, she had the acuteness to perceive in many confused circumstances, increasing corroboration of what she believed. She was, therefore, not well pleased at the pertinacity with which Jasper Tomlins, the elder, adhered to the idea of Troven being his son. Indeed she thought he had too much of the old leaven of his nature in him for presuming to think so.

“ But now,” said she, “ he will meet with a settler when he sees the young man ; for I am credibly informed there is such a likeness between them, that father and son are written on their foreheads.”

Troven, who knew that she had never seen the son, and that when her affections and prejudices were engaged, the breadth of her assertions was somewhat uncertain, replied, that he did not know she had ever seen the young man.

“ That may be true,” replied Mrs. Servit ; “ but I believe he is his own son, and, therefore, must be

very like him, which is a matter of fact, and admits of no doubt whether or no. However, give yourself no uneasiness, you are my lord's brother, or I am the Queen of Sheba."

Troven, though he laughed at her random assertions, derived something almost like hope from them. He was pleased to see that the evidence, imperfect as it was, produced on any mind so favourable an impression, even while he could not but acknowledge the conclusion extravagant and far beyond anything that the premises warranted. But the very flush of this hope was checked by the foreboding of Villiers; nor did he enquire how much it was in that gentleman the effect of a mental habitude, engendered by disappointment: it was sufficient to make him fearful, that such a foreboding existed.

CHAPTER XII.

At the time appointed, Villiers and young Jasper met at Troven's chambers, and they proceeded with him to an obscure street in the neighbourhood of Smithfield, where Mrs. Tomlins had long occupied a miserable dwelling. It was a back court, mean, damp, and slovenly. On the sill of several windows, however, two or three flower-pots, with geraniums, might be seen, indicative of an incipient taste for the beauties of nature, unexpired among the inhabitants within.

The lodgings in which Jasper had been brought up were occupied by a stranger to whom he was not known; but in the court he found an old lame hackney-coachman, who recognised him at once, and expressed great pleasure at seeing him again. But as this person had not become an inmate of the place till Jasper was grown into a lad, he could give neither Troven nor Villiers any satisfactory information. He mentioned, however, some reminiscence of an old couple who were resident in the same house in which he now dwelt, and who had quitted the court when he took possession. They

had removed to a distant part of the city, to which he gave them a direction, saying, that unless they could tell something about Mrs. Tomlins before his time, there was no other that knew any thing about her.

As they were now bent on a search for evidence, they immediately entered a coach, and drove at once to the place he had named.

They found the house in a narrow lane, surrounded by other habitations similar to those in the court which they had just left, and fortunately the old decrepit couple at home.

Having seated themselves in the sorry lodging, Villiers, who, unless the occasion was more than usually particular, acted as spokesman, enquired of the old man and woman if they knew what had become of Mrs. Tomlins. But instead of replying at once to the question, the old man looked significantly to his wife, which Villiers observing, repeated the question with a little inflexion of sternness in his voice. The woman, in place of her husband, shrewishly noticed his manner, and absurdly said, as it seemed at the moment,

“ We are not used to be spoken to in such a manner.”

There was nothing but the singularity of her expression to mark the observation. It had a tone of pertness disagreeable to the gentlemen ; but the words implied more than met the ear, and Villiers was rebuked by it. Still, however, intent on his purpose, he repeated the interrogation to the old man, who, without raising his eyes, answered, that he had heard of the death of Mrs. Tomlins, adding,

“ It was time.”

“What do you mean by that?” said Jasper; but, suddenly checking himself, he begged pardon for the interruption. Villiers and Troven looked towards each other gravely, without speaking; for the manner in which the ragged old man had answered the question was very striking. He spoke as if awed by a sentiment of shame, and his language, like that of Mrs. Tomlins, seemed in strange discord with his condition.

“We desire,” resumed Villiers, “to know something of Mrs. Tomlins, when she lived near you in Bulldog-court: this young man is her son.”

At this, the old woman exclaimed, “Goodness! is that there he—Jasper Tomlins?”

Her husband looked askance steadily at Jasper, and added,

“You have grown a stout young man since those days.”

But Villiers thought this was said to evade his question, and repeated it in substance, by inquiring what was known about Mrs. Tomlins when he knew her.

The wife again interposed, and, with a sharp voice, replied,

“We didn’t keep such company.”

Her interruption the second time rather disconcerted Villiers, and our hero interfered, by asking if they resided in the court when Mrs. Tomlins took up her abode in it.

The old woman again answered —

“Many a day before;” and began a dissertation on the extravagancies in which Mrs. Tomlins some-

times indulged. But Troven, from a feeling of compassion for Jasper, abruptly checked her, by enquiring if she had any recollection of her having any other children than her son.

"No," said the old man, looking up with more confidence; "but she was, I remember well, two days a-missing from her lodgings, and when she came home, she brought with her a dress for her son, better than became him, and said she had received it from her friends; for you know, I dare say, that she was a woman well born, though she never would tell who were her relations."

This answer seemed exactly what Troven desired to obtain. He made no reply, and for some time his colour went and came; he appeared like one stunned by a blow. Villiers was less apparently affected, but he bent eagerly forward, and entreated the old man to be more explicit.

"I cannot," was the answer; "I only recollect the circumstance, and what was said by the neighbours at the time; for, as my wife says, we were not on terms of intercourse with such a Moll Flagon."

Then, as if to disguise the inadvertence of an expression that betrayed more intelligence than it was becoming to disclose, he added, "for she was, at times, an obstreperous trull."

Jasper reddened a little at the expression, but said nothing; while Troven, taking up the inquiry, continued—

"Have you any recollection of what the dress she brought to the boy was like?"—remembering

the green and black spotted clothes which Mrs. Collop had described.

In the answer he was disappointed : no distinct remembrance of it was retained, but the conclusion seemed to warrant his inference that it was the same ; for, in addition to the fact, the old man added, that the incident happened long ago, when Jasper was a child not more than two or three years old.

After some time, the party rose and left the house, and, as they walked toward the street, Villiers, taking Troven by the arm, observed that they were making but tardy progress.

Something in the tone of this remark smote the ear of our hero in such a way, that he could not help replying —

“ You surprise me, Villiers—you seem more dissatisfied at discovering a tendency in any evidence we can obtain to prove me a gentleman, than I could have imagined—as if you were vexed to find your preconceived opinion unsound.”

“ You do me wrong,” answered Villiers, “ in thinking so ; but I fear that the bias of your mind is to build castles in the air ; and in all our enquiries, you insensibly lean to a favourable construction for yourself of what you hear. It is not such trumpery as old clothes you should think about—we forgot to enquire if the child, of whom Mrs. Tomlins acknowledged herself the mother, was our friend Jasper here.”

Troven, disturbed at the remark, knew not what to answer ; and Villiers, seeing his confusion, turned round to the sailor, who was walk-



ing behind, and inquired if he could conduct them to any person whom he knew when he was very young — “a mere child,” said he; “for in our pursuit we are at fault.”

Jasper thought some time, and then said that he had a recollection of a person to whom his mother sometimes went, and took him with her when a child.

“Conduct us there,” cried Villiers; “we must not sleep in this uncertainty.”

CHAPTER XIII.



IN proceeding to the house to which they were conducted by Jasper, his mind gradually brightened; reflection blew the dust of time from his memory, and many images were restored that he had forgotten. At last he told them, among other things, that he was born, he believed, in the woman's house, and had some reason to think she had been the nurse of his mother.

“ I think so,” said he, “ from many circumstances that I recollect; but if so, she had been sworn to secrecy, for I never heard of my unfortunate mother's origin.”

The truth was as he suspected : she was his mother's nurse, and she had been sworn to secrecy ; but, in other respects, she merited some esteem ;—her fidelity to her oath was unquestionably praiseworthy.

The house was in one of the streets near Charing-cross, and much more respectable in its appearance than they had ventured to expect ; even though Jasper had told them, judging from recol-

lection, that it was very grand, and that the nurse made her chief living by letting apartments.

On arriving at the door, and enquiring for the mistress, they were shown into a neat parlour by a maid well-dressed and civil ; and Mrs. Jenkins, as the landlady was called, soon after made her appearance.

Villiers, without much preface, told her they had been informed that the late Mrs. Tomlins was acquainted with her, and they wished to put a few questions in consequence.

The nurse, who appeared to be a shrewd and cautious woman, slightly coloured, and replied, apparently with candour.

“ I knew that unfortunate creature,” was the answer ; “ but she has paid the debt of nature, and should not be recollected any more.”

Villiers, without attending to her observation, said —

“ You, no doubt, recollect her son ?”

“ I do,” replied Mrs. Jenkins, guardedly ; “ towards him she was much to blame. All she was guilty of before might have been error ; but to the innocent, her conduct admits, I fear, of no other name than headstrong wickedness.”

“ Then you knew her son ?” said Villiers.

“ When he was an infant I did know him ; but I have heard nothing of him for many years.”

“ Then you do not think you would know him again ?” said Troven.

Without returning an immediate answer, she looked steadily at the sailor for some time, and then said —

“ No, it is long ago ; but he should be about

your own age, or that of this young man :” and she looked again at Jasper.

“ You seem,” said Villiers, “ to regard this sailor rather particularly.”

“ Yes,” said she, “ your question put it into my head, that he, or this gentleman, might be her son.”

Troven grew pale, as if seized with sudden sickness, as she said this ; and Villiers, evidently touched by her remark, resumed his enquiries.

“ Did you ever hear any thing respecting a visit which she made to her friends many years ago ?”

Mrs. Jenkins shook her head, and said, in a pathetic voice —

“ No, no ; let no one tell me that she ever did.”

“ Then you never heard of a dress that she brought from them for her son.”

“ A green and black dress,” added Troven.”

“ Gentlemen,” replied Mrs. Jenkins, “ ask me not more than is necessary ; you probe my heart when you recall her to mind.”

“ But,” said Villiers, “ on this tale hangs much : tell us all you can, and we will be as sparing as possible of painful questions.”

“ I can tell you little,” was the answer ; “ I never asked what she did ; it was grief enough to see her as she was. But I did not imagine this young man was her son :” and, glancing at Troven, she said — “ this gentleman is more like what he should have been.”

She meant only that he was more in the dress of what Mrs. Tomlins’ son should have been ; but both Troven and Villiers put a different interpretation on her words, and thought mentally that

Troven resembled Mrs. Tomlins. The words produced an evident dismay on the countenance of Troven. Villiers also looked more severe than usual ; and Jasper, with an awakened countenance, said —

“ Then you do not think I am her son ? ”

She again examined him with an inquisitive look from head to foot, and said —

“ I can see no resemblance.”

“ Yet,” said Jasper, “ I well recollect to have been in this house with her : do you not remember me now ? ”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Jenkins, “ I do recollect that she at one time came often here, and brought a little boy with her ; you may have been that boy, but years had passed, and she never told me that the child with her was her own : had he been so, I think she would ; for she confessed to many things worse than that. But in truth, gentlemen, I can give you no information : ” and, bursting into tears, the good woman exclaimed, “ Would that she had never been born ! I was her nurse, and had not the heart to bid her go away from my door when she came to it, — but I never enquired into her way of life.”

“ And so,” cried Troven, “ you cannot tell anything of the child ? ”

“ No, no,” cried Mrs. Jenkins ; “ I only know she had a boy with her : but, as I never wished to hear aught of her, I never enquired if he was her own. If any one,” she continued, “ has told you that she visited her friends, and received from them gifts for her child, do not believe it. She was disowned ; and I have heard that, long before I

saw her with you (meaning Jasper), she had been seen by one of her father's servants travelling on the north road not many miles from his residence, with a child, and it was reported that afterwards a child of the same description was found deserted on the neighbouring common. Her father had set his heart against her, and would not permit any enquiry concerning the foundling. It was of a piece with her reckless conduct to leave the child, if she thought it troublesome: but if you," she added, turning to Jasper, "are the boy that was with her in this house, and if the story I have heard of her unmotherly abandoning of her own offspring be true, it happened long before; and, I grieve to say, she was of such a rash nature, that she was both capable of deserting her child in a passion, and of borrowing another to impose on me: but, gentlemen, you ought not to ask me anything more, for you have gone far to make me a perjured woman. I have already said too much, and will say no more."

The interview being thus suddenly put an end to, the party came away; Villiers saying to Troven, as they returned towards the Temple —

"You may report progress, and ask leave to sit again; but I fear — I fear we have lost all clue."

"I do not think so," said Troven firmly; did she not say that a child was found in the neighbourhood of a gentleman's place, and that Mrs. Tomlins had been seen by one of the servants. I will find out the gentleman:" and, with a voice somewhat broken, he added, "she spoke of a common too — all these things bear upon my case." But he had scarcely finished the sentence when

Jasper came up from behind, and said, "She knows nothing about it, for I well recollect that long before my mother took me to her house I was living with her."

"Yes," said Villiers, "in that the puzzle lies; you have been always treated as the son of Mrs. Tomlins."

"As far back as I recollect," said the young man modestly, with something like a feeling of having said too much.

By this time they were arrived at the Temple-gate, where Villiers, bidding him come again next morning, walked with Troven to his own chambers.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN the evening Troven, as advised by Villiers, waited on Lord Buyborough to mention the result of his enquiries, but, at his arrival, he was informed that his Lordship was gone out to a party. The lady and Miss Mordant, were, however, at home, and he was shown into the room, where they were sitting together.

Immediately on his entrance, Lady Buyborough uttered something almost like a shout, and rising alertly from her seat, met him in the middle of the floor, with such expressions of joy as convinced him that she had been speaking of him to the other lady ; and, before he could make any return to the eagerness of her welcome, she cried out —

“ You have come in time — what have you learnt ? we are all ear, and the more we sift the story, new causes arise to make us think that at his father’s death, my lord’s brother was not found ? ”

As she said this, she drew Troven impatiently to a chair, and, taking another beside him, repeated the question.

In a few sentences Troven related what he had

learnt; and particularly described the scene with Mrs. Jenkins.

Miss Mordant, who was sitting on an adjacent sofa listening to what he said, made no remark, but sat still, as he was relating what had passed. He had not, however, said many sentences, when she suddenly broke from her trance, and clapped her hands as if transported by a sudden thought. Both Troven and Lady Buyborough looked amazed, for the demeanour of the young lady was ordinarily gentle and calm. On this occasion she was prompted by the vivacity of a strong impulse, and the Viscountess said —

“ Althea, what is the meaning of this ? ”

Scarcely able to articulate with the vehemence of her feeling, she then told them that she had no doubt it was the prodigal daughter of Sir Mortimer Cavendish, who was her grandfather's neighbour.

Troven, with some emotion, enquired what reason she had for thinking so.

“ I cannot give you reasons,” said the young lady, “ but I have often heard it mentioned, that about five-and-twenty years ago, Sir Mortimer had a wild daughter, who imprudently eloped from his house. Some years after, it was known that she married a servant, what became of her afterwards I never heard, but the name of her husband was— bless me, I forget — I think — ”

“ Tomlins ! ” exclaimed Troven.

“ Aye, Tomlins, it was.”

Troven sat some time silent, evidently ruminating; and then remarked, that what she had heard did not add any thing to their knowledge, but the name of the gentleman whose servant had dis-

covered the mother and the child wandering on the road.

“ I have heard of him,” he ejaculated to himself—“ his mansion is not many miles from Dr. Wycomb’s.—Am I, then, the wretched offspring of that mad and guilty woman ?”

Soon after, he rose to go away, saying to Lady Buyborough, that he would see his Lordship in the morning ; at present he felt suddenly unwell, probably caused by his fatigue during the day.

The ladies saw his perturbation, which they, ignorant of his story, ascribed more to indisposition, than to the effect of the young lady’s discovery, and readily acquiesced in his excuse for going away. Accordingly, he left the mansion ; and, on his departure, Althea mentioned what she had heard of Sir Mortimer’s imprudent daughter, adding —

“ It was thought, at her marriage with Tomlins, there would have been some relaxation of severity on the part of her father, but he proved inexorable, and was justified in his sternness by the marriage itself ; for the man which the ill-fated young lady had selected, was, by all accounts, a worthless, roving, ill-conducted vagabond.”

“ That,” said Lady Buyborough, “ may be all true ; but the child, the child which the servant saw with her — what became of him ?”

“ I cannot tell ; he was found by a gentleman who lived in the neighbourhood : but when I heard the story, it was not mentioned what was done with him.”

“ Aye,” said Lady Buyborough, “ he would be sent to the workhouse as a foundling.”

“By the way,” said Miss Mordant, “he was called Troven, too. I wonder if our friend of that name knows any thing about him? I will tell him the whole story when he comes to-morrow.”

The Viscountess repeated to herself two or three times the name of Troven, and said to Miss Mordant —

“I wonder, Althea, how you never came, in all our perplexities, to mention this before. Troven—if it had been the same that we know, Buyborough would have undoubtedly heard something of him before.”

“Perhaps,” said Miss Mordant, “it was prudent of his Lordship not to be too curious too soon; dear Lady Buyborough, how could you have stood to be called plain Mrs. Mordant, and without a fortune?”

Her ladyship looked very solemn at this searching question, and replied loftily —

“I trust that I have too much regard for what is right, to keep from another what is truly his, be the consequences to myself what they may.”

Miss Mordant, with all her beauty, possessed a stronger mind, and said, laughingly —

“You are very heroineical, my fair cousin, because, hap what may, you must now be Lady Buyborough; but it might have been another story, had my lord continued in a lower rank of the peerage.”

“You are severe, Althea,” said Lady Buyborough, “and you judge uncharitably of me; but it has often occurred to me as strange, how Lord Buyborough so suddenly thought of a new title, and the ardour of his suit to obtain it, when old Mr. Piccroft first mentioned what Mr. Mordant had told him.”

“ It is very clear, said Althea, “ that Mrs. Tomlins’ son could not have been your brother-in-law ; so make yourself easy about the foundling they call Troven, for it is very probable he was her son.”

“ Troven ! Troven !” said Lady Buyborough, and then briskly added — “ my lord, if he return in time, shall drive at once to our Mr. Troven’s chambers, and hear all that he knows. Troven — it must be something that I have heard from you of the name before.”

As she said these words, Lord Buyborough himself came into the room : he was pale, languid, and complained of a stupor in the head, which had forced him to return home sooner than he had expected, saying to his lady as he entered —

“ Do you know, I have had all day an indescribable anxiety to see Mr. Troven. I wonder what he has learnt — that story of old Piccroft troubles me more and more — I have a dread upon me that it is known to the public, and every eye I meet seems fraught with curiosity. It is hard to be innocent of any crime, and yet to suffer like the guilty.”

Lady Buyborough then told him of our hero’s visit, and of Miss Mordant’s recollection of Sir Mortimer Cavendish’s daughter, requesting him to see Troven without delay.

The communication had a startling effect on the noble lord. He rung for his carriage instantly, and set off with the least possible delay to the Temple, where he expected to find Troven ; but that gentleman was not in his chambers ; his lordship was, therefore, obliged to return home and pass the night in the best manner he could with his unappeased anxiety.

CHAPTER XV.

THE state in which Troven left the mansion of Lord Buyborough cannot be described. The moment that the door was shut behind him, his feelings, like ignited gunpowder, instantly flashed, as it were, into a flaming whirlwind. He ran, as if ignominiously expelled : his heart beat, and a singing sound like the noise of a distant cataract rose in his ears. He never disputed with himself if the story Miss Mordant told could be true. It agreed in so many points with what he had heard, believed, and had seen, that he could no longer conceal from himself he would prove to be the son of Mrs. Tomlins, and that the young man who had been brought up by her was Lord Buyborough's brother. This thought was, however, now and then softened by the recollection of the resemblance which he had discovered between the younger and the elder Tomlins ; but it was a likeness which no other saw ; and the reflection soon dispersed the hope it was calculated to inspire.

Instead of returning straight to the Temple, he was so tossed about that he lost himself in the

streets ; and when his confusion abated, he found he was in the way to Mrs. Servit's lodgings, led unconsciously by instinct towards that garrulous but motherly person. When he was admitted to the apartment where she was sitting, she started from her seat, and exclaimed —

“ What has happened ? ” astonished at the wildness of his look, his pale cheeks, and eyes which glared without speculation.

“ Sit down,” she cried — “ Dear me, what's the matter with you ?—are you ill ?—are you frightened ? — that face so pale and wan, and these eyes like —— oh, Mr. Edward, why are you thus dumb-founded ? ”

It was some time before he could make any answer, and when he did, it served to show that his external appearance only indexed the shattered state of his mind.

“ It is all over,” he exclaimed ; “ the discovery is complete.”

“ I'm sure,” said Mrs. Servit, “ that it is not ; for you wouldn't look so startled, had even the madcap woman, Tomlins, been found to be your mother.”

“ She is,” said Troven.

“ No possible ; that could never be.” But there was less confidence in the manner this was said, than was usual to her sanguine anticipations.

Troven enquired, after a short pause, if she had ever heard any thing concerning a daughter of Sir Mortimer Cavendish.

“ Dear me ! — was Mrs. Tomlins his dowsy daughter ? ”

“Ask no questions,” cried Troven, “only answer me. What of his daughter?”

“I remember,” she replied, “that in the very week I came to keep Mr. Pearl’s house, Sir Mortimer’s eldest daughter, who was spoken of as a light-headed Miss, ran away with a recruiting officer to London, and was never heard of more. Merciful me ! did she marry Jasper Tomlins, when he was in, as I may say, the ne’er-do-well line ? Ah ! and was she that poor deluded creature ?—but what has put it into your head, Mr. Edward, that ever such a flower of brimstone could be your mother ?”

By this time Troven had become more composed, and informed Mrs. Servit of what Miss Mordant had related ; nor was it the least of his sufferings that he heard the story from her.

Mrs. Servit listened to him with unbroken silence, and at the conclusion said —

“Is this all ?”

“I fear,” said he, “it is too much.”

“Faint heart never won fair lady,” she exclaimed, with a tone of encouragement, adding — “when the worst comes to the waur, it must be acknowledged that you are both by birth and breeding a true gentleman ; only I always heard that Sir Mortimer Cavendish was a pot-metal hearted man, very just, however, for all that.”

“But my father ?”

“Oh ! if it’s Jasper you mean, he’s no devoid of a good quality. Indeed you spoke yourself of him with commendation ; and the legacy left him by Mrs. Halden’s friend, who was his master, testifies that he has long turned over a new leaf. Na

for that matter, I never knew him a rightful vagabond, but only as a laddie whose hand was never out of mischief, with a natural appetite for putting young dogs to death. I dare say, however, that he got the wyte of many an ill deed that was done by others. But if it should turn out that he is your father, it is, I'll allow, a misfortune. Surely, however, there are worse fathers in the world than poor Jasper : and if the truth were told, I would say, that with all his faults, when I knew him he was a good-looking young man ; since that time he has mended his manners, and I would do a very wrongous thing, if I did not say he behaves himself now like an honest man."

In this speech Mrs. Servit made an effort beyond her strength : in the very endeavour to cheer and give comfort her courage fled, and at this turn of the discourse, her voice faltered, and she suddenly burst into tears, crying, unawares —

" Oh ! and have I lived to see you the son of that reprobate, Jasper Tomlins ? "

Troven was now so far master of himself, that he could not refrain from smiling, though pensively, at this unexpected burst of feeling from the old, kindhearted woman. In a little time, however, she dried her eyes, and said, in a tone of hope —

" I'll not believe it ; for although it might be in a sense something to your renown to be the grandson of that stone statue on St. Paul's, Sir Mortimer Cavendish, there is no necessity that Jasper Tomlins should be your father ; and now that I think on't, it's as plain as a pikestaff, that the daffodil lady that knew all this pater-noster by

heart, has been telling piper's news; for what she said we knew before. Surely I have been demented not to think of that—it's nothing new to tell us that Dr. Wycombe, that fousy man, found you a weeping and wandering bairn on the common; we all knew it long ago; and as for this story about Sir Mortimer's loup-the-dyke daughter, it needs sifting; for her son, that was sent to Indy, was not a shadow, but a substance. It's a clear fact, and there is no argol-bargolling about it, that you were brought to the common by somebody; that somebody may have been Mrs. Tomlins: that I grant; but prove to me she was your mother, my man Mr. Edward! If she had been so sib to you, she would not have left you wandering up and down. Clear, therefore, it is to me, that Miss Mordant knows nothing, and there is no cause to be down-hearted."

In saying this, the wonted confidence of Mrs. Servit returned; but it had no effect on Troven. Fear—we dare use no other name—had settled upon the spirit of our hero; and with eagle talons held possession of his heart.

When he left Mrs. Servit for the night, he might be less violently alarmed than when he joined her; but his hope continued eclipsed, and he returned towards the Temple chilled with the gloom.

On his arrival he went straight to the chambers of Villiers, though the hour was late; and on ascending the stairs he found him at home.

On entering, Villiers also saw by his appearance that something greatly troubled him, although he was comparatively recovered from the condition in which he had gone to Mrs. Servit; and he in-

ferred, that some unfavourable news to him had transpired, but made no remark ; indeed, he felt too much to be talkative. Their research in the course of the day had been confirmatory of his fears, even while he struggled to derive hope from despair ; but with all his endeavours he could bring no fire from the flint.



CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Troven had related to Villiers what passed at Lord Buyborough's, and the persuasion which Mrs. Servit still cherished respecting his parentage, he enquired, with some hesitation, what he would recommend him to do. He felt, in fact, the hereditary inactivity of his family beginning to grow upon him in the lassitude which succeeded the strong excitement of the day, — but Villiers remained silent. He was sad, and it might be said, from the state of his feelings, disappointed. Troven seeing him, as it were, unable to answer, continued his discourse by remarking, that perhaps he should refrain from seeking to discover more, and apply himself exclusively to his profession and his literary engagements.

“ It seems to me,” said he, “ that I shall not increase my happiness nor importance by this mazy pursuit : no doubt it would augment the comforts of my life, which, by-the-bye, the enquiry has rather diminished, were I to ascertain who are my parents, if they are respectable. But it will add to my cares, which are already sufficiently great, if they are not so. Lord Buyborough

is rich enough, and has a sufficient motive for persevering in the investigation : but it is a labour from which I begin to think any one in my circumstances ought to recede."

"I should say so too," replied Villiers, "if you could separate the personal character from the professional ; but my apprehension is, that your nature will not permit the separation. It is in this point of view that we should look at the subject. If you could adhere to the distinction that is necessary, it is clear that the employment of you as a confidential adviser by one so rich as Lord Buyborough, is a prodigious stroke of good fortune. There is no calculating to what it may lead ; but, splendid as the prospect is, you have yourself, I fear, something like too great a stake in the result : for I am inclined to think, notwithstanding the lambent hope that plays with Mrs. Servit's wishes, you may be the son of Mrs. Tomlins ; if so, you have talents, and that about you which foreruns success. That Sir Mortimer Cavendish may relent from his stern determination so far in time as to recognise you, is the very utmost that you can expect in the way of being assisted by your kin.—Yours is a perplexing case—I cannot advise you what to do."

"I do not know," replied Troven, "how it happens that the light which Miss Mordant has thrown upon Mrs. Tomlin's fortunes should so molest me ; it seems as if it had in it something of the nature of flame ; it, however, does not scorch."

These words, carelessly uttered, had an immediate effect on Villiers ; — his gravity became more severe, and, after an emphatic pursing of his lips,

he enquired what sort of person was Miss Mor-dant, and whether he thought her story the mere echo of what she had heard, or a combination of incidents, the effect of intelligence. The answer of Troven consisted of a warm eulogium on her personal beauty.

“ I did not,” said Villiers drily, “ ask about her charms as a woman, but merely of her tact as an intelligent being.”

And in saying these words, there was a kind of cunning in his look, slightly tinged with archness. Troven, however, did not observe it, but replied to the question, remarking that she possessed superior talent ; and that she showed more feeling and discrimination in relating what she had heard of Mrs. Tomlins, than most people would have done in repeating a hearsay.

Villiers remained again silent, and then said, with thoughtful solemnity —

“ You have much ability, and you have made a very favourable impression, both as a speaker and a lawyer. You may rise into eminence — indeed I have no doubt you will — but your connexions are unknown. The aristocracy pay great attention to the matter of connexions. Your success rests wholly on yourself. In the common course of things, you must, therefore, be far advanced in life before the full weight of your abilities can be known. My young friend, I believe that your best course is to escape from your engagements to Lord Buyborough.”

“ I think so too,” said Troven ; “ what you have been saying is in unison with my own reflections. I will not go to Lord Buyborough in the morning.”

“There is prudence in the decision,” said Villiers; “and a professional man has it always in his power to frame a good excuse for not keeping an appointment. But your absence will awaken reflections; and if they have not already there thought, from your name, that you are the same of whom Miss Mordant spoke, your absence in the morning undoubtedly will make them.”

“I have been very silly,” said Troven, “to be so uneasy about that: why should I have been so loth to let them know my history?”

“Ah, did you so: then there can be no doubt of it. You thought that the truth would not redound to your importance. My young friend, you are not half aware of the singleness and simplicity of your own character: here, unconscious of your meaning, you have been telling me, as plainly as you could, that you are attached to Miss Mordant.”

Troven pushed his chair back, and looked up, surprised that such an accusation could be possible.

“Nay,” said Villiers, “it is not the least of your misfortunes to be so: but as it is, in every way in which it can be considered, a hopeless passion, again I say, prudence dictates that you should rupture your intercourse with the family at Buyborough House: you can entertain no hopes in that high quarter.”

“True,” exclaimed Troven, “if I be no other than the son of Mrs. Tomlins; but if I am my Lord’s brother ——”

“Poh, poh!” cried Villiers, “that is a lover’s dream; and, if I listen to it, it is like Jupiter — I can only laugh at it.”

In this manner they continued talking to a late hour ; and, when Troven bade his friend good night, he was convinced that the flushing hopes of his youth were at an end. He was no longer the same being that he had once been. He had not, it is true, entirely ascertained his origin ; but he had discovered enough to make him ponder, — to pause, as it were, and collect his reason. He was much disturbed, and, when he returned into his own chambers, he was unsettled — all his purposes of life driving adrift.

He sat down ; he recalled the incidents of the busy day which had passed, and endeavoured to pick, as it were, out of the disordered mass, something on which he could rely, but it was in vain ; sometimes the vague and wild conjectures of his early, old, and surpassing friend, Mrs. Servit, seemed to furnish a little consolation ; but ever and anon, the recollection of Mrs. Tomlins returned upon him with disagreeable reminiscences. At other times he thought of the young man whom she had nurtured as her son, but he could fix on no steady train of thought ; and Villiers, whose friendship could not be doubted, had treated him with a harsh plainness which he thought might have been spared. Moreover, that gentleman he regarded as prone to expect he would be found of a base origin ; nor could he deny to himself that there was something like truth in an observation which fell from him.

“ If you had been,” said Villiers, “ of a rank much above the lowest, we should have long since heard of many rewards offered for the strayed or stolen boy.”

CHAPTER XVII.



IN the morning, after a sleepless night, Troven rose; and, as it would be some time before the laundress would arrive to make his breakfast, he sat down to write the letter, which, upon consideration, he had determined to address to Lord Buyborough, declining all further interference in his private affairs. The letter was neat in the expression; very sensible, and remarkably fair in the writing, as every letter so concocted, uniformly appears. He frankly acknowledged that he had been inexplicably remiss in not acquainting his Lordship before of his equivocal origin; confirmed the statement of Miss Mordant, and confessed that he was the same young man Troven, to whom she had alluded. He then mentioned his fears that he might be found the son of Mrs. Tomlins, having obtained a knowledge of circumstances which strengthened that opinion; but he said that there was another young man of the same age, of a low condition, who claimed her for his mother; and concluded that he would give all the information in his power to any agent whom his Lordship

would appoint : but that his Lordship must see he was actuated by propriety in entirely abstaining, till the question was settled, from that personal intercourse with which he had been honoured, and, in cultivating which he had enjoyed so much pleasure.

By the time he had finished the letter and made it up, the laundress came into the room, and he sent her to one of the porters to deliver it. While she was absent on this errand, he sat ruminating on what might be the fruits of the discovery, considerably abashed at the turn which the inquiry had so suddenly taken. Painful, however, as it was, he saw that it would not have much effect on his professional career ; and, accordingly, he resolved to conduct himself undeviatingly, on the line he had previously chosen. The resolution reminded him that the time had elapsed in which he should have contributed to one of the periodicals ; and when he reflected how profitless had been his activity in the time he had allotted for writing his contribution, and had of course diminished his income for the ensuing month, he felt greatly chagrined, particularly when he beheld the printer's boy enter the room with a note, which he immediately delivered.

This was an urgent request for his copy, as a place had been reserved for the insertion, which must be filled up with something from his pen, because reliance had been placed on his punctuality ; intimating that the boy was directed to wait for manuscript.

There was nothing in the note but its urgency remarkable, but he felt himself in such a frame of

mind that he could not put two consecutive sentences of common sense together ; yet much depended on his sending something. However, he requested the boy to return in the course of an hour or two, when he would have endeavoured to make up for his neglect.

The boy, accordingly, went away ; and his breakfast being by this time set out, he set in to the repast, with no great appetite, reflecting on what subject he could easiest and most rapidly write, exclaiming to himself, "Truly, he said wisely, who observed that literature was a good amusement, but without some adjunct calling, sad slavery. They do wrong who would exalt the productions of a man's own hand to himself above any other species of labour. Daily toil, whether of the pen, the pencil, or the plough, is still but labour ; and the author feels at times the same loathing that makes the hardship of the hind. He tires of his task ; for, when it is pursued as a profession, it merits no other epithet. All that makes the employment superior to ordinary drudgery, is the work of printers and publishers, just as with more profit the designer of a manufacture engages in a better trade."

"However," continued he, rising from the breakfast-table, "this course of thought will not supply copy to the printer ; and I must be active, for the time is short to which I am limited."

He, accordingly, sat down to the writing-table ; and, after many attempts to put his thoughts upon paper, he found the effort unavailing. More than half the time he had allowed to the boy had elapsed before he could begin his paper ; tears of vexation

at the sterility with which he was smitten burst forth, for he was in a sensitive humour, and deemed himself among the melancholy number of those who possess an inward consciousness of being destined to find life a constant probation, and a race unrequited by any prize.

He at last flung down his pen in despair; but, in the course of a few minutes, a more manly vigour returned, and, instead of giving way to the current of his fate, he resolved, in the emergency with which he was so overwhelmed, to have recourse to an examination of his papers; and among them, before the boy returned, he had selected an essay.

While he was employed in this selection, Villiers entered, who had scarcely passed a pleasanter night; his mind, at no time displaying great equanimity, was really, to do him justice, excoriated with vexation. He thought that he had not acquitted himself so well as he might have done, and was anxious to atone for his error by some explanation concerning himself. It was all he could do, for his utmost sympathy was already exhausted.

“I have come,” said he, “to tell you something of myself, as the only excuse I can make for seemingly being less friendly, in this crisis of your fortune, than I really am.”

Troven requested him to be seated, and said —

“If I knew you less, the variable temper you have recently manifested, would have affected me more; but, knowing the unalloyed bullion of your character, the spurts of vexation, in which you have indulged, produced very little effect. I regretted them more on your own account, for the

sourness of the cud you would afterwards chew, than on my own."

"It gives me pleasure to hear you treat them so lightly; and the only atonement I can make is, to inform you of my own history, a topic, disagreeable to recall, but which, without it is known, you cannot do justice to the sentiments of regard that I have struggled to produce."

"I am all attention," replied Troven; "and, as the remembrance it awakens, is painful to yourself, make a short story of it. I dare not, in truth, say that I do not wish to hear it."

"In incident, it is not remarkable," said Villiers; "it derives all its interest from my own feelings; but it is too soon to tell it all from the beginning, I shall, therefore, only relate to you the public portion—what all the world may know; the private cannot yet be told, nor may it ever; but the combustion of my spirit may be guessed by what I intend to tell."

"When I came to London I was then in the spring of life; hope was in full bloom with me, and all around sunshine and gaiety. I had, however, no friends in this great town, but I brought with me from the country, a mail load of introductions and testimonials; and behind I left a multitude of persons who professed great kindness, and many of them proved afterwards effectual patrons.

"My reception by the gentlemen to whom I was introduced was various; doubtless the consequence of their intimacy or obligations with or to the writers of the letters; some received me cordially, others coolly; and those whom I had understood

to have been most prosperous, did not show any very animated gratitude to fortune.

“In delivering the letters I made a curious remark, one of the earliest which gave me any right insight of the human heart. To three or four of the gentlemen I had several letters, and, in delivering them, I observed in what manner they respectively looked at them, and was led, in consequence, to infer something of their value, nor have I been erroneous in my conclusions.

“From those who opened the letters of their business-correspondents first, the augury of reception was not favourable, but the result proved its correctness when the letters of private friends were preferred, especially when, besides that preference, the subsequent conversation was directed to ascertain on what footing I stood with the writers. According to the degree of my intimacy, was the friendliness of my reception.

“When I had delivered all my letters, received many dinners, but no advices, I saw very distinctly that none were likely to be of any use, and concluded, with my natural decision, that every thing in life depended on myself.

“The discovery was not exhilarating: on the contrary, it made me, for some time, morose and recluse; but when I had thought better, my mood changed—I became a little sterner than I was previously, and much more systematic than my former acquaintance would probably have given me credit for.

“Finding that I was to derive no assistance from others, I began to look about for myself, and soon found the most suitable connexion in all

London. A co-partnery was formed, and its success was gratifying; but it had not been long established when I observed that my partner became restless, and proposed to spend a short time with his friends.

“He was a delicate young man, endowed with many qualities that made him interesting, and I had great pleasure in acceding to his wishes.

“The excessive warmth with which my acquaintance was received surprised me, and was increased to something like amazement at the suddenness afterwards of his departure, which, unfortunately, soon was explained. He had been engaged in business before we came together; but as sufficient time had elapsed, I believed all his transactions were closed. Scarcely, however, had he left town, when my attention was excited towards them; and I learned, with grief, that he had not paid off, but only renewed, his bills. This discovery led to inquiry, and I soon also ascertained that he was insolvent — not to a great amount, it is true — but the deception was great: however, I paid the bills, and wrote to him what had been discovered.

“His conduct, when he knew I was acquainted with the fact, and what I had done, was exemplary and contrite. He returned to town, and evinced himself in all respects possessed of the integrity and qualities for which at first I had trusted him; but the concealment could not be overlooked; and accordingly, I at once frankly told him that, save in the counting-house, I should not know him.

“The ingenuousness of his disposition taught

him to acknowledge that he could expect no other treatment. Alas ! I have had to endure a greater deception. For twelve months we never exchanged words, save on matters of business ; but at the expiry of the year, I told him he had amply satisfied me, and that, if he had no objection, our former intimacy should be renewed.

“ Not many months had subsequently elapsed, when we found ourselves embarrassed by difficulties that had overtaken a correspondent to whom we were much obliged. We did all in our power to assist him, and for some time not without effect ; but his case was worse than we had imagined—he suddenly became bankrupt. In the midst of our distress, another case of the same kind occurred, and our means were perplexed.

“ I need not trouble you with the difficulties that then in a strong stream set in upon us : we experienced the truth of the proverb, ‘ that it never rains but it pours,’ and were unable to weather the storm, which we might have done, but we had no friends who would interest themselves for us. I had none to whom I could apply ; and my partner, after the drains of his previous transactions, none who would afford him any advance. Thus I became an adventurer.

“ Nevertheless, the flush of prosperity which overspread the commerce of the kingdom, soon enabled me, by another connexion, to overcome my first disappointment.

“ But in this there was a sterility of fortune. I resolved no longer to pursue the rainbow ; and, locking up ambition, composed myself for a very humble, quiet life. This determination was unfor-

tunately not lasting: a brilliant proposal was made to me too fascinating to be overlooked by one less aspiring. I acceded to it, and again was involved in a speculative life: but the war beset me anew; my prospects were dissolved—they proved as baseless as the fabric of a vision.

“ Still bright things dawned around me, and from various quarters, I received public trusts till all the dreams of my youth were renewed, and I became an object of envy. The demon fastened upon me, and being allied to a power which I could not overcome, at last subdued me.

“ With that infatuation to which some are driven, those who should, for their own sakes, have been lenient, were induced to persecute me—not from malice, I believe, but by thinking my resources greater than they remained after so many disasters. Scotched, but not killed, I overcame this too, and began again in the same line of speculations, and succeeded in all that was necessary to secure success: but the times were now changed; my associates trembled for the hazards that required only courage to overcome, and, after afflicting delays, I found myself obliged to withdraw from them. It was not without reluctance I did this.

“ After encountering so many misfortunes, the hope lay not within the range of probability, that in the vale of life into which I was descending, the wide and shining prospects would be seen again that opened around when my youth was on the mountain-top. From that time, my steps have been limited to a circle that vicissitude cannot enter. The rim may be narrow, but beyond it temptation can no longer allure. I am not alto-

gether sequestered from former associates. Experience has taught me that I erred when I first abjured a speculative life; but I cultivate no new acquaintance — the old, perhaps, have so much to do of their own, that they begin to forget me. It is commonly supposed among them, that I am studying law, and will be soon called to the bar. Poor men! they know not what I am, if they imagine I could, at my time of life, be such a fool. Law-books I never touch, you know well; and only when required do I appear even to those with whom I am most intimate. I am the hermit of the Temple — as abstracted from society, its cares, pursuits, and politics, as he of the wilderness; and in this condition I will spend the days of my old age. Here I shall be always found, ever ready to give you the counsel of a man, whose experience of his kind has been extensive, if not singular — and various, if not profound.”

THE STOLEN CHILD.

CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Lord Buyborough received the letter of our hero, it produced an effect not anticipated ; for though his lordship was a very good sort of man, he was no philosopher. Smooth and polished in his address, he possessed no particular endowment. It did not, however, much matter ; he was a peer of the realm, and he had, in his manners, many of the best aristocratic qualities. Those who cannot discriminate these from the features of character, are apt to imagine that there is a great difference between lords and ladies, and men and women — a fault which the French critics long ago objected to in Shakspeare's characters. Voltaire discovered the commonalty of his kings and queens. But as we are not of the French school, and do not walk our *dramatis personæ* with heralds and trumpets in procession, we are inclined to follow the mode of Shakspeare, and to

show that the higher orders differ as much in character as the lower, but conceal that difference with the habit of discipline. To return.

The letter of Troven, instead of exciting respect, inflamed Lord Buyborough : it is not easy to say why, but the fact is indisputable ; and he really thought there was in it something like obtrusion. But as no manipulation can make the sandstone into marble, we need not dwell on this misapprehension ; the more especially as, upon reflection, he could not discern any warranty for such a conclusion. Miss Mordant, indeed, endeavoured to set him right by describing the effect which her story had on Troven, regretting that, merely because his origin was known, he should, without alteration, so fade in their esteem, advising his lordship to employ him in his enquiry confidentially again.

“ It cannot,” said she, “ be now a tedious work ; for if he is the son of Mrs. Tomlins, the other young man of whom he speaks is the object to which your attention should be directed.”

“ But,” replied his lordship, “ it would not be according to Hoyle, if a person of my rank, after such a letter, were to apply to this man again, even though I greatly esteem his talents ; but low people have always something about them which makes them forget what is due to those of a superior condition.”

“ You speak harshly, my lord,” said Miss Mordant, “ he may, perhaps, feel that he is superior ——”

At these words she felt that her desire to vindicate Troven had betrayed her into an inadvertency, and she bit her lips, and blushed a little.

“ One would be inclined to think,” said his lordship, “ he had imagined himself possibly my elder brother.”

“ Possibly,” said Miss Mordant ; for the light in which Lord Buyborough seemed disposed to consider Troven, was not, in her opinion, fair. There was, indeed, at the bottom of her feeling, a lurking wish that he were his brother, almost unconscious to herself of its existence ; for although it would be wrong to call it love, it was of that kind of regard which time and opportunity might ripen into affection. However, his lordship was not to be moved by argument from the resolution he had adopted at the moment he received the letter, namely, to ask no further the interference of Troven. In this blind determination he seemed to forget the exact predicament in which he himself stood ; for it was undoubtedly formed without any respect to the effect which his inheritance might be exposed to were his brother found. It thus happened that no answer was returned to the letter, nor the offer of Troven to inform an agent, attended to ; and he acted on the occasion more as a lord than a man. But this mistake was soon corrected by an authority to whom he was more in the practice of deferring than to Miss Mordant.

The regular lawyer perceived at once the drift and spirit of the letter, and told his lordship that much necessarily depended on proving the event of his brother's disappearance, and the wandered child being found to have been coeval with it.

“ In short,” said he, “ we have no alternative : Mr. Mordant, it would seem from Piccroft's story,

is alive to some flaw in your lordship's possession of the family inheritance; he will propagate an account of it for the sake of his own family; and it is no longer to be doubted that your brother did not die in childhood, or rather, to say the truth, he was in childhood stolen. Mr. Troven is necessary to us; and your lordship must overlook any indecorum which he, in his letter, may have committed."

"All evidence," replied Lord Buyborough, "calculated to elucidate the truth, must not only be taken, but sought for. I would retain no man's right, not for a moment; so that, if you think Mr. Troven of importance, I can have no objection to receive what he has to state: but he ought not to have presumed to treat me on quite so much an equality."

The solicitor was a worldly man, but honourable, and replied —

"Your lordship would be, no doubt, correct, were Troven in all things a common man; — but much should be overlooked for his feelings as a foundling."

"Oh, he is no foundling," said Lord Buyborough; "he is the disreputable son of Miss Cavendish."

"He may turn out to be so," replied the solicitor, "but the fact is not ascertained: we have yet to prove that the child, whom the servant saw with her near the common on which Troven was found, was her son — we want proof of that. The other young man has all his life passed as her son, and believes himself so to be. I entreat your lord-

ship to consider that there is the strongest reason to believe that Troven was not her son."

Lord Buyborough was disturbed, he knew not wherefore, at hearing one, whom he considered deep in his interests, talking in this way. It seemed somehow to him that the solicitor should not have spoken so; but he had discernment enough to perceive that he was a man actuated by integrity in what he said, and replied —

"Then you do think the information, which Mr. Troven may have it in his power to give, important."

"It ought not to be overlooked," said the lawyer; "for although the discovery of your lordship's elder brother, so long forgotten, may not be made, yet it becomes the rank and character of your lordship to make every possible enquiry."

"I intend so: my instructions to you are to do all in the best manner; — but I did not think Mr. Troven's evidence could have been so important."

"My lord," replied the man of law, "I acknowledge that his letter is not couched in a proper spirit to a man of your lordship's rank; but, in consideration of his peculiar situation, any impropriety in it must be forgotten."

"Very well," said his lordship; "though my brother were known to all the world to be yet alive, I would not change the mode of my proceeding. I wish the truth to be ascertained, and I hope that all who know me will be ready to believe that I am prepared to acknowledge his right without questioning his deservings."

"Every one," rejoined the lawyer, "will be-

lieve that ; but, if it should be discovered that the young man so disreputably educated is your brother, it will be rather a trial of temper to endure the reflection."

"Undoubtedly it would," said his lordship —
"I would rather have Troven."

This was more than the lawyer could withstand : and, as if he put an end to their consultation, he gathered a few papers which were before him together, and smiling, said facetiously —

"It is a case in which there is no choice ; — younger brothers are but seldom consulted about the birth of their elders."

CHAPTER II.

WHILE fate was evidently busy in hastening on the development of the mystery which hung around Troven, Jasper Tomlins, the father, was not idle, however little his endeavours ministered to that purpose. When he had seen the sailor who bore his name, and who considered Mrs. Tomlins as his mother, he waited on Mrs. Servit, for, with all her peculiarities, it was impossible to know her without feeling a sentiment of regard, notwithstanding the odd and peculiar eccentricities to which she was prone. Independently of having known her many years before, he had considered her, from the time of his arrival in London, as his only sincere friend.

On the self-same day that the interview which we have just recorded between Lord Buyborough and his solicitor took place, he accordingly waited on the old lady.

"Well, but," said she, after hearing what he had to say, "and is the ne'er-do-weel your son?"

"He is," said Jasper, "a very nice, good-looking, though shamefaced —"

"Oh, he cannot be your son, then," inter-

rupted Mrs. Servit ; “ ye need say no more to me about it.”

“ But,” cried the father, who was prepossessed in the young man’s favour by having seeing him, “ he is no longer a ne’er-do-weel—he is a very ’sponsible lad.”

“ Aye, aye,” said she, “ you may say so ; but what was he before Mr. Villiers sent him to Indy ? Never tell me that a ship is not as good a school to learn tricks in as a jail : but, to speak the words of truth and soberness, how has it come to pass that he is your son ?”

Jasper was not quite pleased with the doubts she expressed, and said, rather with a tone of pride, that he had just learned from Mr. Villiers that there was some reason to suppose that his mother was the daughter of Sir Mortimer Cavendish.

“ And what is he the better for that ?” cried Mrs. Servit ; “ wasn’t she a disowned daughter, and died in a state of sin and misery ?”

“ But she was my wife.”

“ A pretty-like choice she made !” exclaimed Mrs. Servit. “ No, no, Jasper ; I have a four-leaved clover in my pouch to protect me from such glammour as that : and what did you make of her being a baronet’s runagate daughter ?”

“ I’ll not deny,” was the answer, “ that she had her faults, and —”

“ Faults !” exclaimed Mrs. Servit ; “ wasn’t she such that even you could not live with her ?”

“ But,” cried Tomlins, “ she was a baronet’s daughter — that was something.”

“ Well, Jasper, I see you have not only found a

son, but got a new light anent that worthless woman, so it's needless for me to blaspheme the character of such a randy. But are you sure that her son is really yours?"

"Why, she said he was her son, and of course, as I was her husband, he must be mine also."

"Oh, Jasper! I never thought you were such a sumph as to speak such evendown nonsense."

"Do you not think he was her son?"

"To be sure I do," cried Mrs. Servit; "what's that? It's easy for such cattle to call the wild Scot of Galloway their sons when it suits their own ends. However, you are now satisfied that Mr. Edward could be no son of yours, as I told you, which, for truth, may be said was words of Scripture."

"Ah," said Jasper, "you cut before the point. I did not say that the young man was more than in a certain sense my son, but only that I had seen him, and that he was a very well-doing, modest lad."

"And let me tell you that I would as soon believe that you can say the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm by heart, with such marks, that he can ever be your son. You could not, Jasper, give to the likes of me better proof than that, he is no son of yours; you'll as soon persuade me that a grumphie is a nightingale, as that a serious, well-bred, pious young man could be your son."

"I did not say," replied Jasper, diffidently, "that he was a religious, pious, young man, because I have not yet had time to probe his faith."

"Eh?" exclaimed Mrs. Servit; "probe his faith?"

“I am not now,” he continued, “what I was long ago: there is a meeting of Christians in our parish, and I have seen the error of my way. Oh, Mrs. Servit, it will be happy for you if you would have a rightful consideration.”

“Are my lugs marrows?” she exclaimed — “is Jasper Tomlins converting me?”

“Oh, Mrs. Servit,” replied he, “little do you know of what has come to pass; since the day that I was born in grace, I have been an altered man!”

“There was great need of it,” said Mrs. Servit.

“Yes, there was great need of it, or I could not have so abided your taunts; but I have been taught to hold up the cheek of resignation to the smiter.”

“Jasper!” said the old lady, “are you the Jasper that I knew long ago?”

“No,” was the sedate reply — “I have since been born again, and my coming to you this day was to see if I might refer to you for my character, as I intend to advertise for a place in an evangelical family.”

“I hope you will put in the papers, too,” exclaimed the incredulous old woman, “that you have the gift of tongues. Jasper! Jasper! you’ll never suit the gentleman that advertises for a groom who does not whistle ‘On board the Arethusa.’ But what has put an evangelical family in your head?”

It is needless, however, to continue this transcript of their conversation. He had become converted in the country by some new-light enthusiasts, of whom the best thing that can be said is, that the practical effect of their particular dogmas

had a beneficial influence on character. From the time he left his wife, a feeling of penitence had been awakened in him, and made him fit to receive their discipline. He really said truly, when he spoke of himself as an altered man ; for whatever were their dogmas, good works were required from their proselytes, as the evidences of their faith ; and this the contrite had literally interpreted ; nor did it detract from his merits that he sincerely endeavoured to prove the efficacy on conduct of the test they required.

Till the confession of his repentance, Mrs. Servit had no respect whatever for any thing that he said ; but the jargon in which he expressed himself, had on her the power of a spell, like the words of potency that rule in incantations. She was immediately seized with a pious horror at her own levity, exclaiming —

“ What have I been about, to be talking to a repentant sinner ? Well, well, Jasper, you are a brand plucked from the burning ; and I would be ill worthy of acceptance, if I did not do all in my power to establish your feet, and set you on your way rejoicing. I can, therefore, only say, that we live surely in the latter days of this world ; for if you are of the elect, you ’ll not be surprised to hear me say, that miracles will never cease.”

CHAPTER III.

WE have now to record an interesting effect which the state of things, at this stage of our story, had on our hero. Whether Troven thought that the chances were against him, of proving himself Lord Buyborough's elder brother, or hope had been awakened that it would at last be manifest, is impossible to say. There are situations in which fear performs the part of hope, and his was one of these.

The apprehension of being the son of Mrs. Tomlins, furnished him with a constant topic of reflection. Among other phantasies that it gave rise to, the radiant image of Miss Althea Mordant often shone with predominant lustre.

Like the elder Jasper, the consideration of Mrs. Tomlins' birth and connections, in spite of himself, inspired him with a sentiment similar to pride, and he often thought the distance between him and Miss Mordant was, in consequence, diminished.

When, at times, the possibility of being the brother of Lord Buyborough gleamed across his mind, the diminution was still greater, and hope gave

nourishment to love. Thus it happened that the resolution not to visit his Lordship till his true condition was ascertained, contributed to strengthen and exalt his passion; for, at this time the glowing feeling with which he was animated, cannot be called by any other name. It seemed, indeed, to grow more intense by time — a fire that derived fuel from the most equivocal circumstances. For, although in some cases he partook of the easy temperament of his family, his peculiar situation gave an impulse to the energies of his character which completely mastered all other inherent qualities. Even the very consciousness of his unconnected condition tended to increase the fervour kindled within him, and that which with many might have ministered to despair prompted to enterprise.

The young lady herself was not entirely passive, but the modesty of the sex veiled her predilection; and what was felt by herself as love was never shown to others, but as the gentler 'equanimity that waits upon esteem. The suspension of his intercourse only made her remember him the more earnestly; for it is one of the curious symptoms of that subtle enthusiasm with which she was infected, to draw nourishment from those precautions which reason often suggests as the most subversive expedients. It thus came to pass that Troven and Miss Mordant mutually experienced the spells of undivulged passion. Without being sensible how much they separately ruminated of one another, they could not disguise from themselves, that of all the world, each was to each the most interesting person. It never occurred to them, however, that their affection was reciprocal. Troven allayed

his aspirations by thinking of the disparity of their determined respective ranks, and by calling to mind his solitariness, and how much he had to achieve in the sterner duties of his profession, before he could indulge in the fond reveries of dalliance and love.

He was in this state of mind when Mr. Audley, Lord Buyborough's solicitor, called on him, with the letter he had written to his Lordship.

"Mr. Troven," said he, "you can hardly be surprised at seeing me on the business which induced you to write this letter to the Viscount. The only thing that excites surprise is, that, acquainted with your own situation, you should, up to this step, have so wisely counselled his Lordship to do what he has done."

Troven did not immediately reply, but looked steadily at Mr. Audley for some time; he could discern, however, nothing in his appearance which betrayed a lower character than an intelligent and well-bred man; he then said —

"Your remark almost perplexes me. Cannot you imagine that it is possible I may have entertained for Lord Buyborough a very particular regard?"

Mr. Audley made no reply; but he had a habit of biting his nether lip, when any unexpected occurrence surprised him; and, on this occasion, he unconsciously gave way to the custom as Troven continued.

"Upon reflection, Mr. Audley, I will be explicit. I am indebted to his Lordship for much civility; but, above all, to his being the first who recognized me as a friend, in a crisis of my fortunes

most important. I could, therefore, with no common feeling, reflect on the degradation of condition that awaited him, if what Mr. Piecroft had heard was true, and his elder brother should be found. I, therefore, advised that augmentation of rank which he has attained."

"You acted very judiciously," said Mr. Audley; "but you know, if the elder brother is found the estates must still go to him."

"True," said our hero, "I thought of that, but he must trust to Providence, that his brother, if ever discovered, will make a suitable provision for him; and he will be let down softly from the great opulence which he has hitherto enjoyed."

Mr. Audley, at this speech again bit his lip, and it occurred to him that Troven would not have made it, had he not fostered some magnanimous notion of his being himself the elder brother. He, however, gave no utterance to this idea, but complimented him for his ingenuity.

What then ensued may be easily imagined; the solicitor heard from Troven the various facts of his case known to himself, and which we have described; he, also, was very particular in his questioning respecting young Jasper Tomlins, but with professional prudence, he offered no opinion, nor did Troven ask him; only he remarked that the whole case was reduced into a narrow compass.

"The chance lies," said he, "between you and young Jasper Tomlins—cannot you discover any person that knew which was Mrs. Tomlins' son, prior to the day on which you were found on the common by Dr. Wycombe?"

"It will be," replied Troven, "hard to prove

what you want at this distance of time. I have no recollection that distinctly goes beyond that event. I have, from the period of being taken under the protection of Mr. Pearl, a very clear remembrance, which reaches back to that point, but beyond it, all with me is vague, and nothing so definite as to be described."

"Has young Tomlins been questioned on this point?" replied Mr. Audley, and he subjoined, as if actuated by a sudden impulse, "Do you not recollect," said he, "any colouring or circumstance in that vague period, before your residence with Mr. Pearl, which you describe?"

"No," said Troven, "none : it was, however, something more agreeable than the home I found in his house. Gracious Heaven ! your question has affected me ; and, in the midst of that obscurity to which I have alluded ; I have suddenly a very clear recollection of standing on a table in a fine room and several gentlemen around me, talking much. I never thought of the circumstance before, though I have often endeavoured to recall some anterior transaction."

He was not, however, allowed to pursue the train of thought which had thus been abruptly awakened, for at that moment Mr. Villiers came into the room, followed by young Tomlins, and Troven made Mr. Audley immediately known to them, and the business on which he had come

CHAPTER III.



EXPERIENCE in the sifting of evidence enabled Mr. Audley to do what Villiers, with superior metaphysical acumen had failed to effect. For, although that gentleman possessed a random discernment of what was wanted to elucidate the truth in Troven's case, he had yet no accurate perception of the course to be pursued in a case so obscure and perplexing. He saw that they stood on the edge of a discovery ; but with all his knowledge of mankind he felt at fault.

Mr. Audley perceived at once, that unless some way could be ascertained to connect transactions subsequent to Troven having been found on the common by Dr. Wycombe, with prior incidents, the evidence would not be linked together ; and, accordingly, he discharged from his mind every consideration but what bore upon previous circumstances. He assumed at once, it was indisputable that Troven and Jasper Tomlins had, from the date of the finding of Troven, an equal claim to be considered as children of Mrs. Tomlins. But before that occurrence, it was as indisputable that

she was only the mother of one son. The question, then, to be determined, was, whether the young delinquent, or our hero, was that son ; and to this point he narrowed his enquiry.

The investigation of Villiers, though not so distinctly applied, was to ascertain the same point : but he was less successful, inasmuch as he could not elicit any such distinct reminiscence as Mr. Audley had so ingeniously suggested by his questioning from Troven. Jasper could not recall to mind any fact. It appeared, that as far back as his recollection could extend, his condition had undergone no change. Squalor and wretchedness had been the unbroken tenor of his life : and the object of Villiers' visit with him was to communicate to Troven his conviction now, in consequence of his examination, that the penitent was not the brother of Lord Buyborough. He scrupled not to tell, before the young man himself, that such was his persuasion.

" Truly," said Mr. Audley, " your research has been very ingeniously conducted ; but you have acquired no evidence that may substantiate the fact. The strongest belief that you can possibly entertain, proves nothing to others ; and this very subtle case requires that others should be satisfied. What was the complexion of those interrogatories which you put to the young man to obtain from him the recollection of any transaction anterior to Mr. Troven having been found by Dr. Wycombe ?"

Mr. Villiers showed that he had conducted the enquiry with great shrewdness, though he was defective in the application.

“Undoubtedly,” said Mr. Audley, “you have expended much ingenuity; but your questions took a bias from the state of your own mind; you apprehended or expected to ascertain, that the young man was Lord Buyborough’s elder brother.

“Right,” said Mr. Villiers; “I had upon me something like a dread of discovering him to be so.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Audley, “your investigation could not then be disinterested; your questions would have a leaning to what you wished; unconscious to yourself, you would put to him questions influenced by your wishes.

Villiers replied with characteristic quickness — “Then examine him yourself: I was not aware of the constraint that was upon me; but now that you call my attention to it, I freely acknowledge the bias.”

This conversation, short as it was, wakened the demon of habitual deceit, that still lurked in the bosom of young Jasper. Two or three times before it had occurred to him that his fortune would be made, if he could establish himself as a lord: and when he discovered that so much depended on the recollection of a child, he grew bolder in his fraud: for unquestionably his idea was founded in that delinquent quality.

After speaking to Villiers, Mr. Audley turned round and said to Jasper —

“Well, my young man, this gentleman does not think there is much chance of proving you Lord Buyborough’s elder brother.”

To the astonishment of all present, Jasper, erecting himself into consequence, said —

“ I did not understand the drift of what he was saying ; for if I had thought he was asking me about any thing particular, that had occurred before my mother went to her father’s, I could have told him many things.”

Mr. Audley treasured in his breast the inadvertent expression of Mrs. Tomlins’ return to her father’s, and enquired what he could have told, as if the question was of primary importance ; but it was only said to mask the impression of the inadvertency.

Both Troven and Villiers were too much fascinated, as it were, by his declaration, to observe what he had said, and the latter rejoined to Mr. Audley’s question —

“ I only wished you could recollect something of an earlier date than your first visit with Mrs. Tomlins to Mrs. Jenkins.”

“ Oh !” cried Jasper, “ I did not know what you were after, or I would have told you as a dream that I recollect, being driven in a fine coach, and having sweet things to my dinner.”

Mr. Audley drew down his brows, bit his lip, and looked grave at this, as he said —

“ Had you not, then, sweet things every day to dinner, that you so recollect them ?”

The penitent looked for a moment audaciously towards Mr. Audley ; but suddenly recollecting the truth of his condition, his innate disposition to counteract the evil of his nature suddenly returned. The blood rose to his face ; his voice, in an attempt to speak, faltered, and he burst into tears, exclaiming —

“ Gentlemen, the devil has been with me : a big

lie was gathering at the root of my tongue. I confess, that to play myself off as a gentleman's son is not in my power."

In saying this, there was a degree of affecting contrition which all present acknowledged; and Mr. Audley, yielding involuntarily to the feeling of the moment, said compassionately —

"Do not attempt, young man, to deceive us; but it would only be to afflict you to say more, and, therefore, let what is passed be forgotten, and answer truly — What did you mean by saying that your mother went back to her father's?"

"I do not know; but it was a thing often spoken of, and I remember she promised to bring me a suit of new clothes to pacify me; I remember this, because she kept her promise, and I got the clothes when she returned."

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Troven and Villiers were left alone, after the others departed, the latter, seeing his companion disturbed, observed, he was glad to say that his doubts were in a great measure dissipated.

“ We have,” said he, “ by the late interview made a little progress—not much, I allow, but still we have advanced. Mr. Audley is quite persuaded that you have some recollection of being in a better condition before, than after you were taken to Mr. Pearl’s house ; otherwise, he conceives, you would not have remarked the difference, unless it had been something much more squalid ; and he infers, in the same manner, from Jasper Tomlins’ account of his dress, which his mother said was obtained from her friends, that he was with her before you were found.”

“ Ah !” said Troven, “ my hopes are, I confess, inclined to fly that way too ; but you forget in what manner the ill-fated young man attempted to deceive us, by the story of his previous state : we cannot trust him.”

“ I did observe it,” said Villiers, “ and was

deeply distressed to see that his penitence was so shallow,—and I resolved not to give credence to his words, unless backed with other testimony.”

“ I never before knew,” said Troven, “ the wisdom of that practice in a court of justice, which discourages the attempt of those who would plead their own cause. The least thing is so interesting to me, that I cannot discriminate between what may be important, and what is not. I fear, I fear, the death of Mrs. Tomlins has caused the portals of truth to be shut for ever.”

“ I fear so too,” replied Villiers, “ for all legal purposes, and that you are doomed to suffer the loss of the title and estates ; but still the evidence thickens, and if you cannot convince Lord Buyborough of the legal validity of your claims, you may, nevertheless, persuade him that they are at least plausibly founded. But did not you say, that the acquitted culprit, whom you brought to town with you, recollected how Mrs. Tomlins’ child was dressed.”

“ Yes,” said Troven, “ it was in rags ; Mrs. Servit has still preserved them.”

“ Ah !” interposed Villiers, hastily, “ there has been a change of dress, as well as of children. Jasper may, perhaps, have some notion of the dress his mother brought.”

“ I would not trust much to that lad ; but in the affair of the dress, we have some corroboration in the testimony of the old couple to whom we were conducted by him, from Smithfield ; and perhaps Mrs. Jenkins can recollect something of the appearance of Jasper, when his mother took her son to wait on her ; if we set rightly about it, we

shall nearly have completed all the enquiry we can make ; besides, the old woman who was allured by the advertisement, recollects something of the dress the elder brother of Lord Buyborough was in when he disappeared."

" It is now," said Troven, " near the hour when she was appointed to call."

The words had scarcely escaped from him when she knocked at the door, and the gentleman ascertained from her that the child had, only a short time before he was stolen, got the dress new, and was placed on a table to shew himself to several gentlemen, friends of his father.

Troven and Villiers looked at one another as she mentioned this circumstance. It would, however, be tantalizing our reader to continue the detail, by which it was as well ascertained as the defective evidence could admit, that Troven was the stolen child, and that the clothes he wore were exchanged by Mrs. Tomlins for the rags in which her son was clad.

In the evening Villiers, undertook to wait upon Lord Buyborough's solicitor, and to report to him what they had discovered, taking with him the individuals who had given evidence on this point.

Mr. Audley patiently examined each separately, and at the conclusion, said, " I am perfectly persuaded that Troven is no other than the elder brother ; but the death of Mrs. Tomlins has made a break in the evidence, and much now depends on his Lordship. All is ascertained that can be known, and I frankly acknowledge that it would be superfluous to pursue the subject further. Your friend Troven has, in my opinion, morally esta-

blished his right; but he has not obtained such evidence as would satisfy any tribunal."

"Do you think," said Villiers, "that his Lordship may be induced to acknowledge the relationship?"

"Of that," replied Mr. Audley, "I cannot say; his Lordship is a good man, and means well, but the surrender of a title and a vast inheritance is a serious thing. I will go at once to his Lordship, this night, and inform him of all that has passed, nor will I fail to state my decided opinion of the case."

Villiers was much pleased with the frankness of this avowal, it was more than he expected, and in consequence he gave Mr. Audley the greater credit. For with all his sinister opinion of mankind, the native goodness of his heart had, in the discovery, the ascendant; in other circumstances he would have ascribed the conduct of Mr. Audley, to the influence of an expectation of acquiring another client hereafter, in Troven. But he was too happy at that moment to entertain any doubt of his singleness and integrity; the only drawback on his satisfaction was as to the manner in which Lord Buyborough would receive the tidings; but he gave no expression to that opinion. When, however, Mr. Audley went to his Lordship's residence, he returned to the Temple, requesting the witnesses to be with him in the morning.

Troven, as we have mentioned, was not at this final interview; he was too much agitated, and had requested Villiers to take the task upon himself, but he remained in his own chambers to hide his trouble. How to act he could not determine, and

he was vexed with himself for thinking that Lord Bayborough might not behave towards him as he felt he would have done had circumstances been reversed. In the midst of these "wild, weltering" thoughts, he was cheered by the image of Miss Althea, like a star between the flying clouds of a storm.

"If his Lordship," said he, "does as a man and a Lord should do in such a situation, I will instantly propose for the lady, and if she consent to accept my hand, it will afford him an opportunity to give her, in the shape of a fortune, what justice and generosity should prompt him to assign to me. Thus we shall prevent our domestic story from getting into the mouths of the vulgar, while his new title secures him against all prying curiosity."



CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Mr. Audley arrived at Buyborough House, he was shown at once to his lordship, who was sitting alone in the library, and who, from the time Mr. Piecroft had told him the story he had learnt from Mr. Mordant, became, to all appearance, changed. The latent infirmity of his nature, indolence, broke out, and, without thinking on any purpose, he was continually immersed in thought. The more he sifted the business, he only received confirmation of the truth, and something like a dread of being stript of all he possessed by a stranger, hung upon his spirits, and depressed him in such a manner as to weaken his powers of action. Many, in his predicament, would have summoned the energies of their character, and resolved on what course they would take, when the fact he feared should be determined. But it was not so with Lord Buyborough ; — he was overwhelmed by what he heard, and he often sat for hours together ruminating on his situation.

Mr. Audley stated to him all that had passed ; and concluded by saying, that there could be no

doubt of Mr. Troven being his brother ; but it became him to say professionally, that sufficient evidence could not be produced to render it probable he would establish his claim. “ A jury,” said he, “ might decide in your lordship’s favour ; but the state of circumstances renders it probable that their verdict would be adverse.”

Lord Buyborough listened to the recital and to the opinion unmoved. The crisis had arrived that required action ; but the hereditary error in his blood was only increased by what Mr. Audley said. Something like a stupor fell upon him ; and one, not accustomed to the occasional inaction of his conduct, would have thought him overwhelmed.

When Mr. Audley paused, his lordship remained for some time silent, pale and absent, looking from side to side as if in search of something : at last he spoke.

“ What do you advise ?” said he, scarcely aware of what he said.

“ It is not for me,” said Mr. Audley, to offer advice ; your lordship must judge for yourself — I can only repeat what I have already stated. There is sufficient ground to contest the right, for I think it no less, of Mr. Troven ; and there is also enough to render it probable that he would not obtain his birthright.”

“ Then you do think,” replied his lordship, “ that I should at once acknowledge him as my brother ?”

“ He is possessed of many qualities,” replied Mr. Audley, “ to bespeak favour and esteem ; but I cannot venture to give advice on that head.”

“ I am perplexed,” replied his lordship ; “ I should have no objection to acknowledge him as my brother — but it is a pity that he has such low connections.”

Mr. Audley turned half-way round at this expression, and then said, “ Your lordship hesitates — I shall, therefore, leave you to-night, and call in the morning. In the interval your lordship will have time to determine on what should be done.”

“ The suggestion,” said his lordship, “ is very prudent. Have you any idea of what Mr. Troven would take to let me clear off ? for unless one knows what sum would satisfy him, there is no coming to any conclusion.”

To this speech Mr. Audley somewhat drily answered, that it did not altogether depend on his lordship’s discretion. “ Mr. Troven,” said he, “ is now the claimant. Your lordship has no choice but either to make with him a friendly arrangement, or to resolve to contest his pretension.”

“ How is that ?” said Lord Buyborough with a vacant look, as if he did not understand what he was saying.

Mr. Audley looked at him with severity for a moment, and then again repeated he would call in the morning and receive further instructions, and immediately withdrew.

This interview was not calculated to inspire much esteem for his lordship’s disposition ; it was such that the impression became disagreeable, with all his worldly-mindedness, to Mr. Audley ; and it was such that, in spite of the amiable rectitude of his lordship’s character, would have ex-

coriated the feelings of every one — and yet it was but an effect of consternation : his lordship, at the moment, had no distinct conception of his own case.

However, when Mr. Audley withdrew, he joined the ladies, and told them what had passed. Miss Mordant remained silent, but it was evident that she was greatly interested ; and when she had heard the story she retired to her own room. Lady Buyborough was differently affected ; she was angry, she knew not wherefore, at Mr. Audley for bringing such a story, as if he had any thing to do with its incidents ; and she expressed herself as if offended that Mr. Troven should presume to have any right to what her lord enjoyed, and strenuously advised his claim to be resisted by every rigour and artifice of law.

Her warmth awakened Lord Buyborough to the knowledge of his case ; and to her he appeared in a much more respectable light than he had done to Mr. Audley.

“ If we had a choice,” said his lordship, “ I should, perhaps, think like you ; but we have none. Mr. Audley told me, in substance, that we are at the mercy of Mr. Troven ; and though I had some fear, it did not appear to myself at first so obvious ; and now, that I have thought better of it, it will be more prudent to make a compromise with Mr. Troven than to go to law.”

“ Do you,” exclaimed her ladyship, “ believe he is your brother ?”

“ Mr. Audley believes he is,” was the reply.

“ But do you ?”

“ I cannot answer that question, because I have not yet had time to reflect on what I have heard.”

“ Then,” said her ladyship, “ till you have reflected, do nothing ; but unless I was convinced he was our brother, I would treat him as an impostor, notwithstanding there is so much to like about the man.”

Without observing particularly what she said, Lord Buyborough exclaimed, as it were, to himself, “ He is my brother — all I have is his inheritance !”

“ Did you not,” interrupted her ladyship, “ say, in repeating what Mr. Audley had told you, that it was by no means clear ?”

“ Ah, Gertrude, you give a version of what he said according to your wishes. He did not say there was any doubt of Mr. Troven being my brother : he only mentioned that, by the death of Mrs. Tomlins, the chain of evidence to prove him so was broken.”

Her ladyship had no answer ready, and, for lack of words, made use of tears.

CHAPTER VII.

WE never have the same open-hearted confidence with the friends of our riper years that we have with the early companions of our youth. Whether a constitutional feeling prompted Troven to obey this custom of our nature in any inordinate degree, or that his foundling condition made him more cautious as he grew older, cannot be ascertained ; but he was in the practice of communicating to Mrs. Servit every incident by which he was affected. While he often laughed at her garrulity, he entirely trusted to her affection : towards Villiers, with all his veneration for his virtues and discernment, he could never venture to be so explicit.

He had gone to her lodgings while Mr. Audley was with Lord Buyborough, to inform her of what had taken place ; for of all the world he correctly deemed that no other felt so much interest as she did in his fortunes.

He repeated the various incidents which had been added by the events of the day to his story, and concluded by saying, with an exultation that to her was natural —

“ I have no doubt, now, that I am the brother of Lord Buyborough, and entitled to the family peerage.”

“ There can be no doubt of that,” said she ; “ did not I tell you all along that you were come of something, as would in the end be seen ? and now it’s proven that you’re a lord, which should make us very thankful to Providence that, sooner or later, makes its justice manifest.”

“ I should have said,” replied he, “ it is all but proven that I am Lord Buyborough’s brother.”

“ Well, well,” said she ; “ what’s in your butts ? is not the thing clear ? For my part, I never had a doubt on the subject ; but what does my lord say ?”

“ Oh, I have not seen him ; Mr. Audley, his solicitor, is to make the communication.”

“ His solicitor !” said she ; “ I don’t like that—lawyers are fond of fishing in troubled waters.”

“ But,” said Troven, “ Mr. Audley appears to be a very honourable man, and frankly acknowledges the truth.”

“ Oh,” said Mrs. Servit, “ if it’s true, how can he make it false ? No, no, Mr. Edward ; if he thinks that you are my lord, he may have been wheedling with your credulity, in the hope of getting your business when the king himself cannot hinder you from your rights. So say nothing to me, for, as you know of the old, I have an eye in my neck, and can see as far through a mill-stone as Mr. Audley, honourable man as he is. But if I had been you, I would have had no black foot between me and my lord after being sure I was his brother. I would have gone to him myself, and

discoursed with him in cordiality and brotherly love concerning what has come to pass ; and you know, as he was none to blame, I would not have been overly strict in calling on him for count and reckoning of the rents ; but if I found him a contumacious man, I would not have faiked the tenth part of half a farthing of my dues. No, no, Mr. Edward ; you must see him yourself, and make, as you will do, a liberal bargain with him."

At these words, the two Tomlins were announced as being solicitous of an interview with Mrs. Servit.

" Oh, by all means," said she ; " I want to see them ; for I have never set eyes on the get, and I would like to satisfy my curiosity by a comparison."

The servant girl accordingly showed up the father and son ; and the moment they entered, Mrs. Servit clapped her hands, and shouted —

" Oh, he's as like the old one as a kitling's like a cat—I would have known him all the world over !"

And, turning round to Troven, she added,

" The young one has just the 'denticle cow's lick of the hair on his brow that the old one had when I knew him."

It was true what she said ; for young Jasper had the same swirl of the hair on his forehead which in his younger years had been remarkable on his father. She then added,

" Look at them both ; can ye have any doubt that they're father and son, only the son is the decentest of the two, even though he has been — but now he has turned over a new leaf, and I must keep my thumb on the days when he was no better

than he should be. Old Jasper, what do you want with me?"

"Why," said he, "I think it is of no use to seek for another son: I am content with this one."

"I never heard you utter before such a mouthful of common sense: 'deed, you may look far, with bent brows, before you meet with one so like you. Don't you see, Mr. Edward, the likeness?—the sun and the moon are not more like one another than them."

"I own," said Troven, "that the resemblance struck me before, though I could not then point out any particular mark."

"Well, that is most odd," said she; "for the old one has a black front tooth—there it is; and the young one has the very self-same tooth broken. Can anything be clearer than a mark of mouth? And so, Jasper, you have resolved to take the young man for your son?"

"I might do worse, mem; he is a very well-doing lad."

"Whist, whist," said she; "let by-gones be by-gones; he may be a weel-doing lad—say that, and there's time enough before him, at his age. You were yourself no babe of grace, but now ye're a penitent sinner, and no doubt he may be so too."

"I hope he will," said Jasper; "and he is very sorrowful for what he has been."

"I am blithe to hear you say that; but take him out of London as soon as ye can—otherwise, depend upon't his old confederates will make up to him, as a deserter from their corps. It's a grudging thing, you know, Jasper, to see a man

that we knew a ne'er-do-well, grow better than ourselves."

"That," said the father, "is just what I have been thinking, and we intend therefore to go into the country to-morrow morning, for which cause we have come to thank you, mem, for being so befriending."

At this speech, Troven, with as much of an air of indifference as he could assume, recollecting the probabilities in which he himself stood, requested them to delay their journey for another day, and, perhaps, something might turn up for him; but Mrs. Servit interposed.

"No, no; do not wile the poor lad to put his neck in jeopardy. I see what ye mean by the e'e in my neck; and it's like yourself to be so patronizing; but let him go with his father, and there will be time enough to do to him an awmous deed, when all's settled."

"Well," said Troven, "since the sight of the eye in your neck is so sharp, I will leave the whole matter to you."

Upon which Mrs. Servit, winking significantly to the elder Jasper, said, with a cunning look, which might be easily interpreted,

"Dear me! and are you going so soon, Jasper? You had better not be in such a hurry. Call to-morrow with your son, and we'll confabulate anent him by ourselves, for I have this night some instant business with Mr. Troven, and I'll not detain you at present. Well! I never saw such a likeness between a father and a son before—really, it's a wonder. However, Jasper, come the morn's morn-ing, and I'll be at leisure to hear all about it."

Upon which the father and son withdrew, promising to come in the morning; and the moment they had retired, Mrs. Servit cried, in an audible whisper,

“ Well! the crow thinks its own bird the whitest: “ but, except the cow’s lick on the brow — gude preserve me for leeing! — I could see no more likeness between them than a hen to a coalie dog; only as Jasper has taken up with him, it would not have done, you know, to put him out of conceit with the poor lad; and so, as I knew very well, that with all his faults Jasper was but soft-headed, I thought it my duty to do what I could to make him believe that the young man was his son; and really, though I could not discern any whether or no about him, to prove that it was his son, the truth is, you know, not always to be told.”

CHAPTER VIII.

NEXT morning Troven rose earlier than usual, and, to save time, went to Villiers' chambers to breakfast with him, intending, at a becoming hour, to visit Lord Buyborough, as Mrs. Servit had suggested ; for, with all her peculiarities, he paid a proper respect to her sallies, as they may be called, of shrewdness and experience.

To Villiers he related what she said, and what had been his own conclusion, and he was confirmed in his resolution to wait on his Lordship, by that gentleman.

"Sometime soon," said he ; "it will be necessary to wait upon him, for I greatly doubt if it will be possible to establish your right if he resist ; but from what I have understood of his character, and the way in which he has always acted towards you, except in the single instance of not otherwise noticing your letter, than by sending Mr. Audley here, he has been in all the vocations of his condition, an amiable and irreproachable man ; no doubt difficulties change characters, and the dread of coercive measures may have a baneful influence

on his conduct, but when I think of it, why should you regard him less than your brother?"

"I," replied Troven, "do not regard him as less; but he may prove so, and it is that 'may,' which makes me hesitate. I have no doubt now that he is my brother?"

"Nor have I," replied Villiers; "but I think it was his duty, if he felt as he ought to do, to have waited upon you; you are the sufferer by what has happened, and should be conciliated, if any thing like conciliation be required."

"True, but you should recollect that he has been brought up as a Lord, and some allowance must be made to the best hearts for insisting on etiquettes. I have made up my mind to wave ceremony; indeed, there should be none in our respective situations."

"I will say no more," replied Villiers; "I think you do right in going. All that I intended to say was, that he might have come."

Villiers then related in what manner he had managed with the Tomlins; for it was by his interference that the elder received the younger for his son.

"Indeed," said he, "there could be no doubt on the subject morally, and in a case where the heart beats strongly, legalities are not worth much. I am as convinced that the young man was rightfully fathered, as that you are the elder brother of Lord Buyborough, and yet the evidence is not complete."

Immediately after breakfast, Troven proceeded to Buyborough House. He was resolved, but he was not comfortable: as he went along the streets,

there was a flickering in his mind, and he could pursue no steady train of thought. Every thing depended on his brother, and the omens were not favourable; but still he considered that their relationship was not so equivocal as that there should not be every reliance on the reputation of his Lordship. With reflections of this kind, hope, like a halo, surrounded the image of Althea in his bosom; but there was such a transition of fancies, that by the time he reached the door, he felt himself greatly disturbed.

The porter who admitted him, though totally unacquainted with his business, he imagined, looked at him scrupulously, and was more civil than usual. The servant who conducted him into the breakfast-room where his Lordship was sitting with the ladies, though he acted precisely in his accustomed manner, he also thought marked his demeanour; and he entered the apartment in considerable trepidation.

Lord Buyborough himself, from his situation at the table, saw him first; and, without speaking, rose as he came in, and hastily met him. The better genius of his Lordship had regained the ascendancy, and he took him by both hands kindly, and exclaimed —

“ My brother ! ”

The ladies looked round, and both rose from their seats; while Troven, unable to resist the flood of feeling which so unexpectedly rushed upon his heart, bent his head upon Lord Buyborough's shoulder, and actually sobbed aloud with emotion.

Without making any endeavour to calm this sudden expression of sensibility, his Lordship led

him to a seat, and waved at the same time for the servant to hastily withdraw, who seemed to linger in witnessing so extraordinary a scene.

He then said, affectionately,

“You have but anticipated me; a night’s reflection has enabled me to get the better of unbrotherly thoughts; and I had resolved to see you soon, and to assure you, that although you may not be able to prove the right, every thing that I am possessed of, and that I can give, is yours; over the title you are yourself aware I have no power; but that you are my lost brother I no longer doubt, and I trust to yourself entirely.”

“During this speech, the ladies were melted with tears; for some how it happens, that when women know not what to say, they make up for speaking, by weeping.

Troven had, in the meantime, so far recovered his self-possession that he could reply to his Lordship with a steady voice—

“My reception, and the kindness of your Lordship, were more than I expected. Since I have been so frankly acknowledged, I have but gratitude to return. Be master of all you have, my Lord; you have been accustomed to consider it as yours, and I have never known it as mine. To take it from you, would be a great privation, and I am not sure it would do me an equivalent good.”

“Lady Buyborough dried her eyes at this, and was loud in her laud of his generosity; but the leaven of her natural feeling shewed itself in her remarking, that as she was the daughter of their father’s elder brother, had she been a son, the estate would have been her’s.

“ Yes,” said Troven, “ your ladyship is quite right, and had Miss Althea been a son, and no such person as your Ladyship in existence, the inheritance would have been her’s; and therefore I have a proposal to make, that will place us all on a proper footing.”

“ Let us hear it,” said Miss Althea, with a degree of impatience, which she could ill conceal.

“ Are you so anxious?” said Troven. “ Then I am sure there can be no reason why I should not speak out” — and he said this in a tone of earnestness that caused her to blush; and then he disclosed his project; namely, that if Miss Althea would consent to accept him as a wooer, he would take for her fortune the half of the inheritance.

“ Why!” said Lord Buyborough, abruptly, “ you have spoken my very thoughts; I was diffident of making the proposal, lest your affections might be otherwise engaged.”

“ Say as little, my Lord, on the subject as you can; I have an abhorrence to be the talk of the vulgar: if this young lady — if Miss Mordant has no objection, let the arrangement take place as soon as she thinks fit.”

And accordingly, in the course of a few minutes, every thing was settled; so that when Mr. Audley called, agreeable news awaited him. He was informed of what was intended, and received his instructions to prepare the marriage settlements before the gossips of the town were aware how much they had been mulcted of a charming feast.

CONCLUSION.



THE virtual restoration of Troven to his birthright, necessarily brings our romance to an end. He was in due time married to Miss Althea Mordant ; and Lord Buyborough not only divided with them his inheritance, but presented the bride, on the morning of her wedding day, with a rich casket of jewels. Every thing was done on his part that could be expected from him ; for he allowed Troven to take his own way as with his own, in the division of the property, and to indemnify himself for not attempting to claim his peerage by a seat in one of the boroughs over which the family exercised the jurisdiction, as things were in those days, of patronage.

Villiers continued a much esteemed friend with our hero ; but he was so enamoured of the life of retirement to which he had consigned himself, that he refused on all occasions to be indebted for any favour. It was among the characteristics of this singular man to be of opinion, that the acceptance of favours destroyed the equality of friendship, and he acted on this principle : but it was observed,

that as he grew older, his humours mellowed, and to the children of his friend he was as indulgent as a grandfather.

Mrs. Servit lived to a very old age, without undergoing much change of character ; and our hero's wife was delighted at her consent to take up her abode with them. She would not, however, agree without also insisting on having a charge ; for it was one of the whims of this notable matron to think that, some time or another, neglect would appear, where there was not hire or honour to be earned by preventing it. Hire could not be spoken of ; but she had, in consequence, every investiture of power that could entitle her to the latter ; and to humour her fancy in this respect, the day after her appearance in his house, Troven himself, in her presence, called his domestics together, and informed them of the trusts and superintendence to which she was called ; a proceeding so prodigiously agreeable to the old methodical lady, that before the assembled servants were dismissed, and immediately at the conclusion of their master's speech, she felt herself inspired to address them on her inauguration.

“ My friends,” said she, “ you have heard what Mr. Troven—that should be my lord, though he is only a master—how he has been telling you to render me all dutiful obedience, which you ought to be very thankful for, as it is well known that servants, unless they are well looked after, are apt to go a gray gate ; and it's more for your good than your master's that I am to be set above you ; therefore, I expect that every one of you will do your endeavours to give satisfaction, for I can

assure you, if I catch any of you remiss in your duty, I'll make the bravest repent with a pin in the nose."

The other *dramatis personæ* spent the remainder of their days without any thing very remarkable in their lives; it is reserved for the few and the far between, to be famous for adventures; the inhabitants of the world in general end as they began. The only one, of all that we have introduced, that deserves to be recalled to remembrance, is young Tomlins. Troven would have taken him into his service, and had a pleasure in promoting him for Villiers' sake; but the young man stood in such awe of his past conduct, that he declined the offer, and went with his father into the country, where he became in time a sober, sedate, and well-behaved schoolmaster, who occasionally scattered the manna among the congregation which his father had joined, and where he shone a great and shining light, as his brethren were pleased to call him, when he vouchsafed to edify them with an exhortation.

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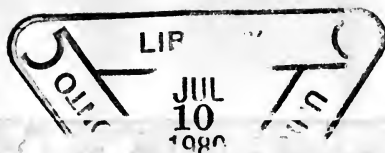
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